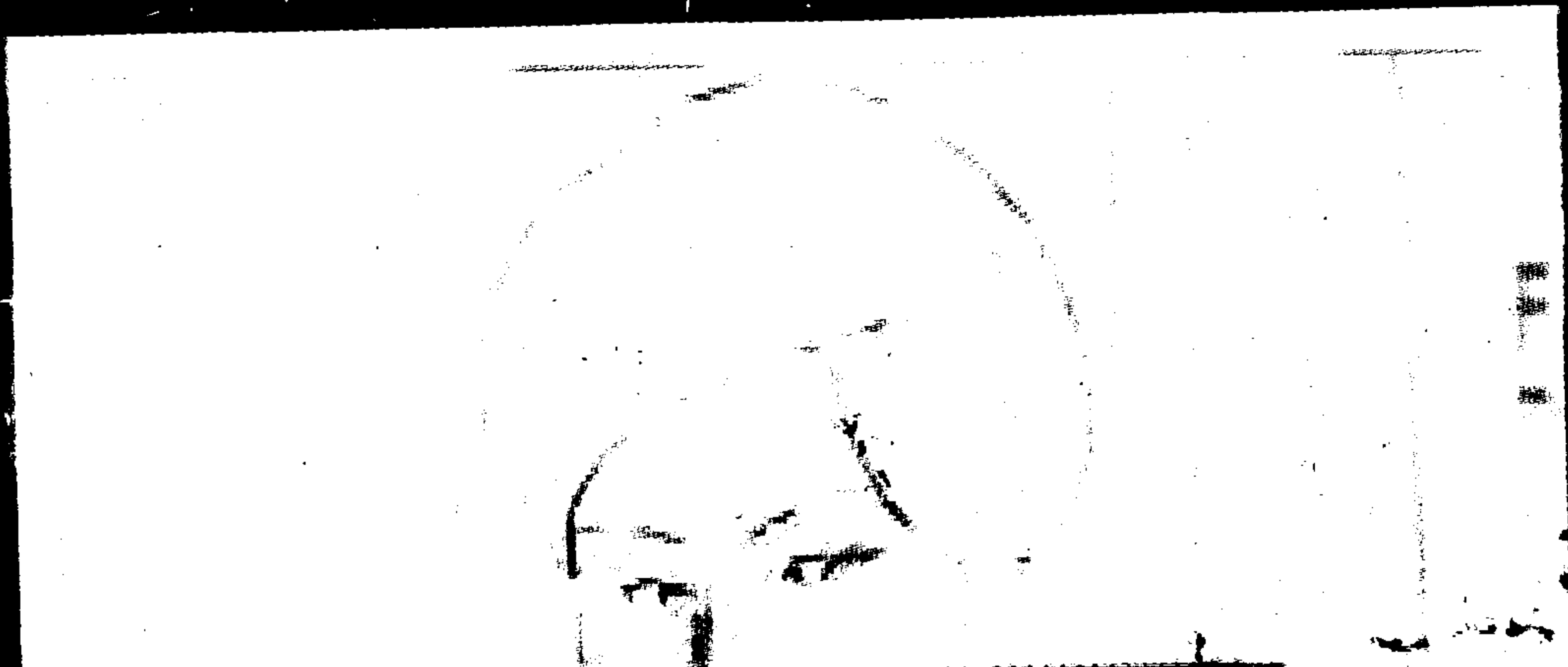
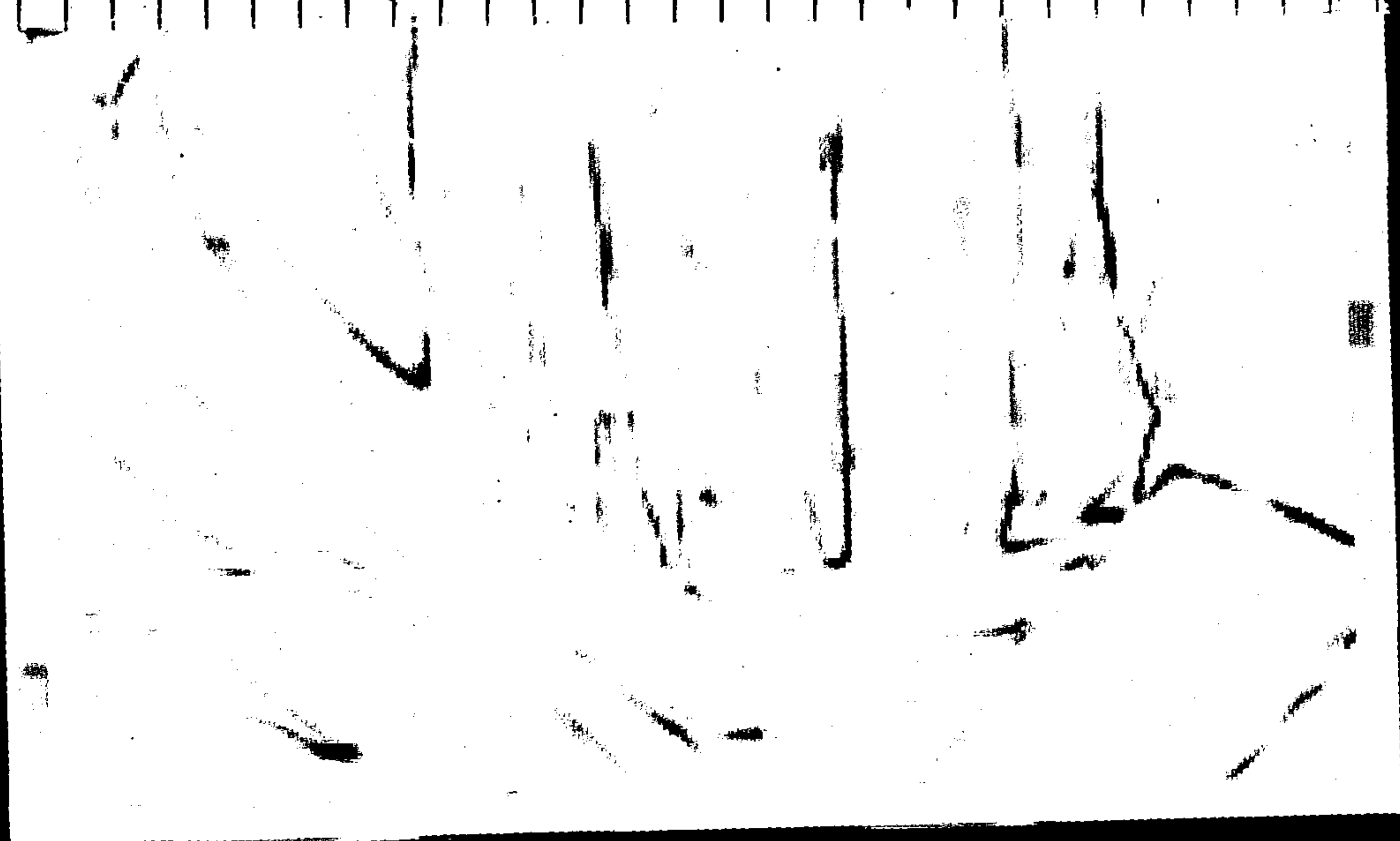


Baba Dayal Ji



PARAS - 621



Edited by : J.S. Grewal

With a Forward by : Dr. Man Singh Nirankari

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No

85



Dr. J.S. Grewal

(Biographical Note)

Professor J.S. Grewal, now Honourary Director of the Institute of Punjab Studies at Chandigarh, was formerly Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar, and Director of Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla. He was Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto in 1988 and Distinguished Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1998. Professor Grewal has published books on Historiography, Medieval Indian History, and the Punjab. By now, however, he has published more on Sikh history. The most notable of his publications on Sikh history are the following :

- 1. *Guru Gobind Singh : A Biographical Study* (jointly with S.S. Bal), Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1967.**
- 2. *Guru Nanak in History*, Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1969.**
- 3. *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1972. A revised edition published by Manohar, New Delhi, in 1994 as *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Sikh Social Order*.**
- 4. *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, Cambridge University Press, 1990 (Rev. Ed. 1998), as a volume of *The New Cambridge History of India*.**
- 5. *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1997.**
- 6. *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1998.**

Dear Dennis Polyzis

with regards,

W. J. Stachurski

11/8/2004

BABA DAYAL

Founder of the First Reform Movement Among the Sikhs

Edited by
J.S. Grewal

With a Foreword by Dr Man Singh Nirankari

**Chandigarh
2003**

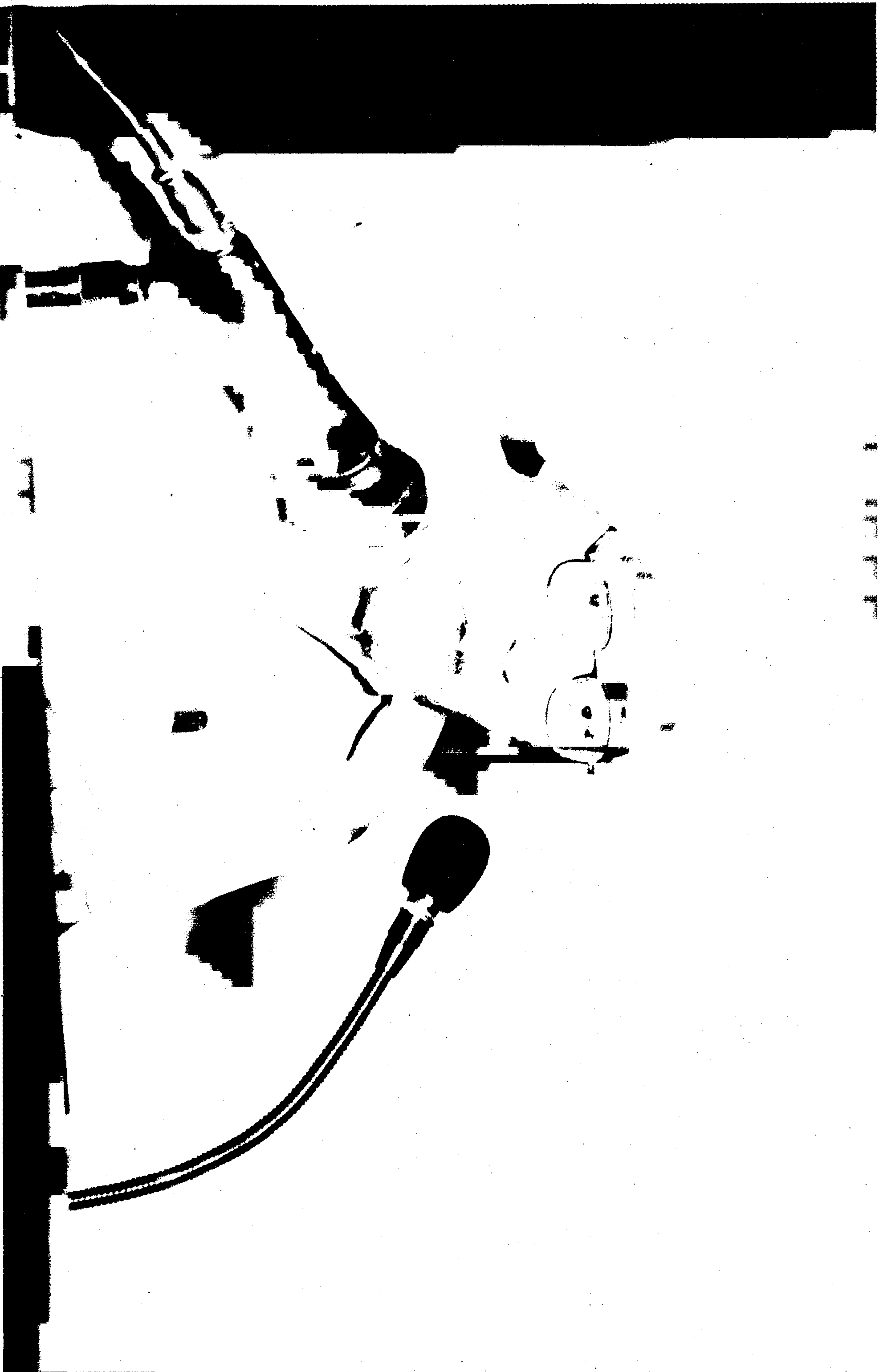
FOREWORD

Guru Nanak, the first Guru of the Sikhs, was a visionary with a deep spirit of enquiry about the true meaning of religion and the way it was practised during his times. He travelled far and wide and met many scholars of varied faiths, confabulated with them about their religious beliefs, and engaged in insightful debates. He questioned the practice of meaningless rituals and ceremonies in the name of religion. Astrological configuration had become the determining factor for all decisions regarding birth, marriage and death, rather than rational thinking. This empowered the Brahman to become the sole arbitrator of men's destiny. They were exploited rather than guided in understanding the real place of religion in human life. Guru Nanak was pained to see how religion was being manipulated to serve the interests of the few. He began to preach ethical living and the need to remember God (Nirankar, the formless). He organized *sangats* (congregations) where hymns were sung in glory of the Lord. By establishing the *langar* or community eating, he dissolved the caste system in one stroke when all sorts of people sat together to partake a meal, ensuring a spirit of communal harmony.

Guru Nanak was the first religious revolutionary who raised the issue of the woman's low status in the society. Perhaps you could call him the first feminist. He says,

ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥



Dr. Man Singh Nirankari Delivering the inaugural Address

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ॥ (੪੭੩)

The woman is our friend, and from the woman is the family. If the woman dies, we seek another : through the woman are the bonds of the world. Why call woman evil who gives birth to kings and all?

Guru Nanak preached the existence of One God, rather than the polyglot of many gods and goddesses. The concept of formless God cut across the diverse voices that existed during that period.

ਨਾਉ ਤੇਰਾ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਇ ਲਇਐ ਨਰਕਿ ਨ ਜਾਈਐ॥

Thy Name, O Lord, is the Formless One (Nirankar);
Dewelling on it, one falls not into Hell.

Guru Amar Das, the third Guru of the Sikhs, raised his voice against *sati*, the burning of the woman on the funeral pyre of her husband. This in a way gave rights to the disfranchised woman, creating a consciousness against this terrible custom.

Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Guru, collected the hymns and sayings of his predecessors. The poetry of saints and thinkers belonging to different religions and castes was given the same respect and status and compiled in the holy Granth. This became the nucleus for the preaching and spread of Sikhism. Most of the converts to the Sikh religion came from the Hindu families.

The enormous popularity of the Gurus teaching, and their impact on society, made Emperor Jahangir feel insecure. This led to the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev,

and the arrest of his son Guru Hargobind.

The continuous confrontation with the Mughals, and persecution by them, which led to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur also, made it impossible for the Sikh Gurus to establish their *dharamshastra* (ceremonies from birth to death). In 1699 Guru Gobind Singh formed the Khalsa to defend themselves against this onslaught. But in the process he could not establish any form of religious or social governance before he was killed by the forces he opposed. After this, for the next 50 years, the Sikhs were either fighting or hiding in the jungles to protect themselves against the wave of violence unleashed against them. Ultimately, the Khalsa triumphed and established their rule in the Punjab. This was followed by the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who took over the governance of the Punjab by uniting it under his tutelage. Even though Maharaja Ranjit Singh was an outstanding administrator, he was not a religious leader, and that lacuna was filled once again by the Brahman priests. Once again they became powerful as the fountainhead of all decisions regarding religious practices. Old prejudices, superstitions, and caste divisions once again came into play. The practice of *sati*, female infanticide, incarceration of widows, brutalities against the lower castes tore the social fabric, and all the reforms introduced by the Gurus were forgotten. The followers of the Gurus were Hindu converts who had continued to live in the social environment of the community from which they came and to follow Hindu ceremonies and social practices. As Bhai Gurdas says:

ਗੁਰਮੁੱਖ ਸੁੱਖ ਫਲ ਸਹਜ ਘਰ ਵਰਤਮਾਨ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਵਰਤੰਦਾ।
 ਲੋਕਾਚਾਰੀ ਲੋਕ ਵਿਚਿ ਵੇਦ ਵੀਚਾਰੀ ਕਰਮ ਕਰੰਦਾ।
 ਸਾਵਧਾਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਗਿਆਨ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੀਵਨਿ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਵਿਚਰੰਦਾ।
 ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਸੰਦਾ। (ਵਾਰ ੧੬, ਪਉੜੀ ੩)

A Gurus disciple performs the rites and rituals (Karam Kand) by the social and community norms, which are based on the Vedas. But for spiritual advancement he is guided by the Gurus teachings and attends Sangat regularly and is released from the cycle of Birth & Death (Mukti)

In 1783, three years after the birth of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was born Sahib Baba Dyal in Peshawar. His father was Ram Sahai Malhotra and his mother was Ladiki who came from an illustrious Sikh family. Bhai Bhagwan Singh, who worked as a treasurer with Guru Gobind Singh, was her grandfather. His forefathers from Kabul had come to India to pay respect to Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur. Baba Dyal's mother was deeply religious. Under her influence, he discerned painfully that the teaching of the Gurus was not being practised by the community in its real spirit, and this set him on the path of reform. With a missionary zeal, he tried to reinstate all the social reforms that had been set into motion by the Gurus but had not percolated deep enough in the Sikh social order due to political upheavals. He focused his attention on the eradication of *sati*, emphasized the need of widow remarriage, condemned female infanticide, advocated the equality of girls with boys, favoured abolition of dowry and

other evils responsible for the suppression of women. His insistence on Anand marriage became the basis of the Anand Marriage Act of 1909 which had far reaching social consequences. Along with this, he reiterated the worship of one God, who is formless (Nirankar), as laid down in the *bani* of Guru Nanak. This is the reason why Baba Dyal is called Nirankari. Due to his liberal ideas and reformatory efforts he was ostracized by the Hindu-Sikh community and forbidden to get water from the common well and to burn the dead in the common cremation grounds. This did not deter him from the onerous task he had envisaged for himself.

It is unfortunate that Sikh scholars and Sikh history have not given Baba Dayal his rightful place as one of the most outstanding and far reaching reformers of his times. His progressive ideas, his commitment to the betterment of society, and the position of women, have been strangely ignored. This seminar, and the compiling of its various articles, is an attempt to rectify this very vital deficiency in history.

I would like to thank Mr. P.H. Vaishnav for his support in making the seminar such a success, as well as Mr. Rashpal Malhotra (CRRID) for being so generous with his space, hospitality and warmth. I would also like to thank Dr. Kirpal Singh for his lucid keynote address, and Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian for conducting the proceedings of the seminar. A special thanks is due to all the participants of the seminar without whom nothing would have been possible.

I feel happy that Dr. J.S. Grewal readily agreed to edit the proceedings of the seminar. I am thankful to him for the time and effort he has put into this task in the midst of major academic preoccupations.

Man Singh Nirankari

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Cover Designed by Kabir S. Chaudhary

PREFACE

Early this year, Dr Man Singh Nirankari organized a seminar on Baba Dayal Ji as a pioneer reformer among the Sikhs. Shri P.H. Vaishnav, who presided over the seminar, concluded his observations with the remark that Baba Dayal tried 'to restore the true ideology of Sikhism so that it did not shrink to a minor sect of Hinduism'. Therefore, it is 'the duty of all those who want a healthy renewal of the true Sikh doctrine to spread his message'.

Several scholars participated in the seminar. I wrote a paper for it but could not present it personally. Dr Nirankari invited me to edit the seminar papers for publication and I agreed to do so in view of the importance of the subject in the history of Sikhism. Two short papers on the Nirankari Movement in general did not make any significant statement on Baba Dayal. It was decided to omit them. Two other papers were written in Punjabi. Since the total number of papers for the volume was very small, it looked reasonable to have all the papers in one language. These two papers were translated into English : Professor Pritam Singh re-wrote his paper in English, and Professor Dharam Singh's paper was translated into English by Professor Indu Banga. All the five papers constitute a more or less coherent whole.

I am thankful to Professor Indu Banga for translating Professor Dharam Singh's paper, and to Professor Dharam Singh for reading it carefully to make a few changes, though very minor. Ms Sheena Paul has helped

me in preparing the edited typescript and I am thankful to her. Dr Man Singh Nirankari agreed on my request to contribute a 'foreword'. I have every hope that this short volume would serve as a good scholarly introduction to the Nirankari Movement in general and to Baba Dayal in particular.

31 October 2003

J.S. Grewal

INTRODUCTION

The earliest notice of Baba Dayal was taken by the Christian missionaries in the early 1850s when he was still alive, and at the height of his influence. The British administrators of the Punjab took notice of his successors and followers, known as Nirankaris, in the Census Reports. The earliest document of the Nirankaris is a *hukamnama* issued by Baba Darbara Singh (1855-1870), the first successor of Baba Dayal, and recirculated by his second successor, Sahib Ratta Ji (1870-1909). The Nirankaris began to look back at their history, especially on the life and teachings of Baba Dayal, in the 1920s in order to spread their influence through the printed word in the time of Baba Gurdit Singh (1909-1947). This became all the more necessary after 1947 when the Nirankaris had to establish themselves all afresh in the Indian Union under the leadership of Sahib Hara Singh Ji (1947-1971). The largest contribution to the study and propagation of the Nirankari ideas and practices has come from Dr Man Singh who has a number of books, articles, and pamphlets to his credit. His 'foreword' to this volume has a unique value as a Nirankari perspective on the Nirankari Movement in general and on Baba Dayal in particular.

The first Sikh to write about Baba Dayal and the Nirankaris was Hira Singh Dard whose father was a Nirankari, and who himself was sympathetic to the Nirankari movement, having been influenced by it in his early life. It was largely due to his association with the

Nirankaris that he first wrote about them in 1929-30. The first protagonist of the Singh Sabha Movement to take notice of Baba Dayal and the Nirankaris was Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, with a short entry in his *Mahan Kosh*, also called the *Encyclopaedia of Sikh Literature*. After 1947, Shamsheer Singh Ashok included the Nirankaris in his *Punjab dian Lehran*, published in 1954. The first monograph on the Nirankaris by a professional historian appeared in 1979, John C.B. Webster's *The Nirankari Sikhs*. It remains the single most important work on the history of Baba Dayal and his successors. Thus, the scholarly literature on Baba Dayal and the Nirankaris is not only recent but also rather small in volume. In this context, the present volume should be of great interest to scholars interested in Sikh history and Sikh tradition.

The first paper in this volume was written by Professor Pritam Singh on a personal request from Dr Man Singh Nirankari. He frankly admits that he had not read anything on the Nirankaris before. Therefore his response to the discovery of the Nirankari Movement is warm and candid. He appreciates the Nirankari achievement in comparison with the Udasis, the Nirmal Panthis, and the Sewa Panthis. The main Sikh stream of Sikhs was not worried about the deformities that had entered Sikh lifestyle in the early nineteenth century. Single-handedly, Baba Dayal tried to rejuvenate the rapidly deteriorating Sikh society on the basis of the original teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. He rejected all superstitions, rituals and prohibit-led ceremonies relating

to birth, death and marriage, being faithful to the clear instructions of the Gurus who had rejected Brahmanical *karam-kand*. Despite persistent opposition and even excommunication, Baba Dayal remained firm in his faith in giving right direction to a society that was going astray. For him, the sacred text of Guru Granth Sahib was self-supporting, needing no authority of the Vedas, Upanishads or any other Indian text. In the historical perspective of the Sikh community, Baba Dayal was the first person to have established the independent nature of the Sikh system of belief and conduct.

In Professor Pritam Singh's view, Baba Dayal made significant contribution to the consciousness of Sikh identity. Those who trace this consciousness to the divisive policy of the British, or credit the Singh Sabha Movement for this achievement, may have to revise their opinion. However, Baba Dayal's influence was severely limited, and Professor Pritam Singh thinks of possible reasons for their restricted achievement. One reason could be Baba Dayal's exclusive focus on the Khatri of Pothohar. Another could be his 'excessive involvement with the past'. No time was left for chalking out a common programme for the future development of the whole Sikh community. Even a more serious reason in Professor Pritam Singh's view, the Nirankari Movement was apolitical. The Nirankaris in their lifestyle were close to the original teachings of the great Gurus, but indifferent to the concerns of the Sikh community as a whole.

In the second paper, Professor Dharam Singh talks

of writings on the Nirankari Movement, their relative importance for its study, and the issues they raise. The first Punjabi writing on Baba Dayal and his successors appeared in the 'Sikh History Number' of *Phulwari* (December 1929 and January 1930) in which Hira Singh Dard takes up four Sikh movements: the Nirankari, the Namdhari, the Singh Sabha, and the Akali. Apart from the authenticity of information based on personal experience and observation Dard tried to present both the strength and the limitation of the Nirankari Movement. He turned to the Nirankaris again in his *Itihasik Yadan* (1955) in which, among other things, he refers to the belief of the Nirankaris in a personal Guru, a belief to which Dard could not subscribe. Bhai Kahn Singh's entry on the Nirankaris in his *Mahan Kosh* was very brief and yet not free from mistakes. When this was pointed out to him, he wrote a letter appreciating the singular contribution made by Baba Dayal to the propagation of *Gurmaryada* against all odds. Baba Dayal was one of those great men who live in accordance with their convictions and become an example for others.

Soon after Independence, Surinder Singh Nirankari, son of Baba Hara Singh, gave detailed information on various aspects of the Nirankaris in his *Nirankari Gurmat Prarambhita* (1951). It became an important source for the historians of the Nirankari Movement. Dr Man Singh Nirankari has carried forward this tradition in a number of articles and books to give a comprehensive account of the essential and important

teachings of Baba Dayal and his successors to highlight their unique contribution to Sikhism and Sikh history. Professor Dharam Singh underlines that Dr Man Singh always bases his arguments and expositions on Gurbani which for him is the final authority in matters religious and social. Sometimes he is uncritical in the use of evidence from other sources.

The account of the Nirankari Movement in Shamsheer Singh Ashok's *Punjab dian Lehran* (1954, 1974) is quite comprehensive and appreciative, especially the Nirankari practice of Anand marriage. Ashok also points out the difference between the Nirankari *ardas* and the main stream Sikh *ardas*. He points to the decline of the Nirankari Movement after the rise of the Singh Sabhas. Surjit Kaur Jolly's account of the Nirankaris in her *Sikh Revivalist Movements* (1988) refers to the religious and social concerns of Baba Dayal and his successors. She appreciates John C.B. Webster's book on the Nirankaris and is also critical of his approach. She disagrees with Webster on several points. Professor Dharam Singh himself was not able to get hold of *The Nirankari Sikhs*. Therefore, he has not commented on Surjit Kaur's view of his work. In the light of these writings on the Nirankari Movement Professor Dharam Singh hopes that Nirankari studies would grow further in future.

In the third paper, Professor Harnam Singh Shan refers to the influence of Brahmans on the Sikh royalty and Sikh aristocracy leading to dilution and degeneration of the Sikh tradition. The Bedis and Sodhis projected

themselves as spiritual preceptors and custodians of Sikh religion and ethics, but they were steeped in Brahmanical rituals and ceremonies. This grave situation called for the emergence of a staunch believer in the Sikh faith to stem the rot. Baba Dayal proved to be the man of the hour. He took up the uphill task of religious reform and social regeneration with a missionary's spirit and a reformer's zeal. He restored the worship of the Formless (Nirankar) and meditation on Him alone. He disapproved of all those rites and rituals which were violative of the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. His teaching in the social sphere was no less radical. He dispensed with the Brahman priests and enjoined the performance of all rites in a distinctively Sikh way. He was ostracized but he faced the situation heroically. He resisted the subtle and serious approaches of the Christian missionaries and awakened the Sikhs to a threat from their inroads. The movement started by Baba Dayal proved to be the precursor of the Sikh renaissance under the banner of the Singh Sabha Movement.

Professor Kirpal Singh looks upon Baba Dayal as a pioneer Sikh reformer. The background of the eighteenth century and the context of the early nineteenth illumine the importance of Baba Dayal's work. His life exemplified his commitment to the Sikh way of life in terms of beliefs and practices. Adducing the evidence of Christian missionaries and the Census Reports, Professor Kirpal Singh highlights its religious beliefs and practices, social ceremonies, and ethics. He quotes John Webster on the nature of the Nirankari Movement to agree with him that

Baba Dayal had no intention of founding a new sect, but to disagree with him on the point of his influence. In Professor Kirpal Singh's view, it is not valid to maintain that Baba Dayal started no movement. He wanted to purify and revive Sikhism. He believed in the Ten Gurus and the eternal Guru Granth Sahib. The Nirankaris made a collective effort to reform the Sikh society which was drifting towards Brahmanism. They formed a socio-religious movement and Baba Dayal proved to be a pioneer Sikh reformer.

In my own paper, which is the last, I look upon the work of Baba Dayal as an interpretation of the early Sikh tradition. The observations made by John Webster in *The Nirankari Sikhs* are outlined in order to see if the evidence used by him can be interpreted differently. The Nirankari Hukamnama carries the implication that the mission of Baba Dayal had divine sanction; its objective was to direct all the Sikhs, whether Singhs or Sehajdharis, to 'the way of the Name' forgotten under the baneful influence of Brahmans. Baba Dayal is referred to as 'the true *guru*' but his belief in the Ten Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib is also explicitly stated. Satguru Dayal may thus be seen as the true guide to Guru Granth Sahib. As an interpreter of the early Sikh tradition on the basis of the authority of the Gurus themselves he needed no other authority. By the early nineteenth century there was no authority higher than that of Guru Granth Sahib.

I suggest that Baba Dayal's insistence on the Formlessness of God appears to be linked up with his

rejection of the idea of incarnation and the practice of idol worship. Congregational worship through Gurbani *kirtan* was the only mode of Sikh worship in the days of the Gurus. Similarly, following honest pursuits as householders was an injunction coming down from Guru Nanak. Initiation through *charanamrit* was the practice of the Gurus before Guru Gobind Singh introduced the baptism of the double-edged sword (*khande-pahul*). Baba Dayal was closer to the Khalsa tradition than the Singhs of his time in excluding Brahmans from Sikh ceremonies and in demonstrating a distinctive Sikh identity. However, he was closer to his contemporaries in giving greater importance to the doctrine of Guru Granth than to the doctrine of Guru Panth which was linked in a sense with the baptism of the double-edged sword. On the whole, thus, Baba Dayal's interpretation of the early Sikh tradition was amply justified but it was not comprehensive enough to embrace the whole of the Khalsa tradition. Essentially, the movement initiated by him was a Sehajdhari movement. A precursor of the Singh Sabha Movement in some important ways, the Nirankari Movement was a partial interpretation of the tradition of the Ten Gurus.

In his Foreword to this volume, Dr Man Singh Nirankari refers to the essentials of Guru Nanak's monotheistic and egalitarian message which brought women and the outcastes into its orbit. Guru Amar Das opposed the practice of *sati*, and Guru Arjan compiled the holy Granth in which respectable status was given to the saints of different religions and castes. The enormous

popularity of Sikhism made Jahangir feel insecure, which led to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. Continuous and prolonged confrontation with the Mughals made it impossible for the Gurus to establish distinct Sikh ceremonies from birth to death. Ultimately, the Khalsa triumphed and Maharaja Ranjit Singh began to rule over the entire Punjab. However, the Brahmans began to dominate in matters social and religious. Old prejudices, superstitions, and caste once again came into play. The practice of *sati*, female infanticide, incarceration of widows, brutalities against the lower castes tore the social fabric, and all the reforms introduced by the Gurus were forgotten. Their followers were Hindu converts who continued to live in the same social environment and to follow Hindu ceremonies and social practices.

Realizing that the teaching of the Gurus was not being practised by the Sikh community in its real spirit, Baba Dayal tried to reinstate all the social reforms set into motion by the early Gurus but halted by political upheavals. He was opposed to the practice of *sati* and favoured remarriage of widows; he opposed female infanticide and favoured equality of girls with boys; he was opposed to dowry and favoured better treatment for women. Baba Dayal's insistence on the performance of Anand marriage became the basis of the Anand Marriage Act passed in 1909. He reiterated the worship of one God as laid down in the *bani* of Guru Nanak. In Dr Man Singh's view, thus, the contribution of Baba Dayal in the social sphere was rather unique. There is no doubt that Baba

Dayal's insistence on the performance of Sikh ceremonies in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib without any role for the Brahmans was unqualified, and the sole basis of his argument in favour of distinctively Sikh ceremonies was Guru Granth Sahib. Dr Man Singh feels that Baba Dayal has not received adequate recognition from Sikh scholars, and he has not been given his rightful place in Sikh history.

Dr Man Singh has tried to bring the Nirankari Movement to the notice of the historians of the Sikhs. He has shown me a letter he received from Dr G.C. Narang in 1966 in which Narang points out that the most important difference between the Singh Sabha Sikhs and the Nirankaris was the latter's belief in 'a living Guru'. The slight difference in the words of the *ardas* was also important. Narang adds that the teachings of the Nirankari Gurus were of high order, and that he would use the information given to him by Dr Nirankari in a future edition of his *Transformation of Sikhism*. A letter of Principal Niranjan Singh received by Dr Man Singh in 1977 appreciates the 'tracts' sent to him and the views expressed by Dr Nirankari. He also mentions that when he, and his elder brother Master Tara Singh, received *amrit* from Sant Attar Singh he had no knowledge of the Nirankari Mat. Having read the 'books' sent to him by Dr Nirankari he had no doubt in retrospect that the change that took place in the Pothohar in a few years was due as much to the activity of the Nirankaris as to the Singh Sabha Movement. Principal Niranjan Singh states categorically

that '*pritham bhagauti simar ke*' at the beginning of the Sikh *ardas* reflected Brahmanical influence.

Dr Man Singh has been graciously sending his books to me. His *Sikh Dharam te Sikhi*, published in 1981, contains his essays on Sikh religion and philosophy. Included in these are essays related to the contribution of the Nirankari Movement to change in the rites and ceremonies of the Sikhs, the importance of Sehajdhari Sikhs in Gurmat, and the 'revolution' of the Anand marriage. The *Sadh Janan ki Acharj Katha*, published in 1996, is related entirely to themes which have a direct bearing on the Nirankari Movement. The *Sikh Dharam de Sidhant*, published in 2000, is a revised and enlarged version of the *Sikh Dharam te Sikhi*. One of the additional essays relates to the nineteenth century Nirankari Gurmat Sahit and its influence on the Sikh Panth as a whole. All these books are indispensable for the historians of the Nirankari Movement.

Dr Man Singh has written articles in English as well as Punjabi, and has edited books in English. In 1984 he brought out *A Prophecy Fulfilled: Baba Dayal Ji Nirankari* as 'a brief biographical narration of a devout Sikh of Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh'. Apart from his own essays, it contains essays or extracts from the writings of Ganda Singh, John C.B. Webster, Hukam Singh, Gopal Singh, Khuswant Singh, Baba Surinder Singh Nirankari, and Jasmittar Singh. An enlarged edition of this book was published in 1997 as *Baba Dayal : Crusader of True Sikhism*, with Dr Dewan Singh as co-editor, and with

Dewan Singh, K.S. Duggal, Niharranjan Ray, and Neelam Man Singh Chaudhary as additional contributors. This volume contains also extracts from the reports of the Christian missionaries, Census Reports, and Teja Singh's *Gurdwara Reform Movement* (wrongly attributed to Ruchi Ram Sahni).

Dr Nirankari's works are scholarly, though not always critical enough from the historian's viewpoint. His purpose is not merely scholarly in the sense that it ends with acquiring or imparting knowledge. His primary purpose is to propagate the Nirankari message, which makes his works all the more important for the study of the Nirankari Movement. In this, he is in line with his predecessors who published tracts and books for this purpose. Indeed, the *Nirankari Gurmat Prarambhita* (30 January 1951) was Tract No. 20 of the Young Nirankari Association (of Nirankari Darbar, Rawalpindi), with its Camp Office in Amritsar. It proved to be a major source for Shamsheer Singh Ashok's account of the Nirankaris, along with Giani Khazan Singh's *Nirmal Nirankari Itihas* published in 1935. Other important tracts appeared subsequently : Tract No. 23, relating to the *Nirankari Hukamnama* (of Akal Purkh for all the Sikhs); Tract No. 24, *Nirankari Gurmat-Modhi Sri Baba Dial Ji*, by Giani Hira Singh 'Dard'; Tract No. 25, *Nirankari Prem Prakash : Shri Satguru Sahib Ratta Ji Wallon Bakhshash Guriai Pad*, by Kavi Bhai Kahn Singh – all three published (in fact reprinted) in 1955. Tract No. 26, *Gursikhan di Ardas arthat Bhagauti ke Nirankar?*, was published in 1956 and

Tract No.27, *Van-su-vanne Shardha Phul*, in 1957. All these publications are in Dr Man Singh's personal library. With these materials, among others, it may be possible for a historian to improve upon the only historical monograph on the Nirankari Movement : John C.B. Webster's *The Nirankari Sikhs*.

J.S. Grewal

1

BABA DAYAL JI**Pritam Singh**

I

When my dear friend Dr Man Singh Nirankari approached me to participate in the Baba Dayal Seminar with my contribution on Baba Dayal Ji, I told him apologetically that I knew nothing about the great person he had named and, therefore, expressed my inability to be of any help to him. He sent me a couple of books, including one entitled *Baba Dayal* in English. As I went through it, I was impressed with the socio-cultural impact made by Baba Ji on a section of the Pothohari Sikhs during the early nineteenth century. In fact I felt a little embarrassed that I had all along been almost completely blank about this highly committed Sehajdhari activist who was ready to suffer social boycott but would not allow Gurmat, the Guru's philosophy, to be misinterpreted either by word of mouth or by practice. I therefore, thank Dr Man Singh for enriching my mind with information on a subject that had remained out of my reach till only a few days back.

II

Baba Dayal, the founder of the Nirankari Movement, was born in 1783 in Peshawar, the capital of North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan. Chronologically speaking, the Udasis, the Nirmal Panthis and the Sewa Panthis preceded the Nirankari Movement among the Sikhs. The



Prof. Pitam Singh Delivering his paper on Baba Dayal Ji Sh. P.H. Vaishnav
Presiding on the function Dr. Nirankari and Mrs. Phul Nirankari looking on.

Udasis had established their own centres in and out of the Punjab, even out of India and were busy in producing literature that euologised Guru Nanak and his son Baba Sri Chand. But the fact remains that almost always they remained on the outskirts of the main Sikh society. The Nirmalas, like the Udasis, were celibates and had their own establishments where they produced literature. Unlike the majority of the Udasis, the Nirmalas kept long hair and were closer to the main Sikh stream but like the Udasis they were also approximating Gurbani to the classical Indian philosophy, especially Vedanta, without understanding the original activist philosophical, social and cultural base of the Sikh movement. They also helped the resuscitation of the ritualistic system rejected by Guru Nanak Dev. The Sewa Panthis were good people and used to provide succour to the deprived sections of society and the physically-challenged persons, even animals, but they also remained silent spectators of the rise of rituals and ceremonies, superstitions and idol worship which the Hindu priestly class had re-introduced in the Sikh society. The main Sikh stream at that time was not worried about the deformities that had entered Sikh life-style but was attuned to the glorious victories of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. If the whole of this socio-religious background is kept in view, then the single-handed effort of a Sehajdhari Sikh of Pothohar to rejuvenate the rapidly deteriorating Sikh society on the basis of the original teachings of the Guru as contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, stands out as an unparalleled endeavour.

Baba Dayal was nineteen years old when he left

Peshawar to settle in Rawalpindi, the epicentre of Pothohar. It was the time when Afghans had been finally ousted from the Punjab, and Maharaja Ranjit Singh had established himself firmly at Lahore to conquer the small principalities around. Baba Dayal was interested neither in the exploits of the conquerer nor in the plight of the vanquished. His whole attention was diverted solely towards the socio-religious confusion that prevailed around him. Whatever he had heard from his mother or had learnt from the singers of the Gurdwara of Bhai Joga Singh, was completely at variance with what the ordinary Sikhs were doing in practice. He felt greatly upset when he saw this dichotomy prevailing around him. A point came when he could not tolerate this self-deceiving behaviour of Sikh society any further. He was so much in tune with the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib that he could not compromise with sham. He believed that God had no form and therefore the worship of idols was untenable. He rejected all superstitions, rituals and *prohibited* ceremonies relating to births, deaths and marriages as being un-Sikh. The Gurus had clearly rejected *karam-kand* but here he saw it flourishing among those whose veneer of allegiance to the Guru had become extremely thin. He felt that the Sikhs were insulting their own Guru by violating his clear instructions.

III

Baba Dayal used to go regularly to the religious place called Pishaurian di Dharmsala. Inside the walled structure they used to worship idols of Hindu gods and goddesses

along with Sri Guru Granth Sahib. A plethora of rites and ceremonies were conducted under the guidance of Brahman priests. He began to denounce these practices openly in 1815. What followed his action and the way he stood firm against all odds, singles him out as a person with extraordinary grit and determination. He was debarred from entering the Dharmsala. Undaunted, he got a new Gurdwara built where unadulterated Gurmat reigned supreme. He was excommunicated from his community. He accepted this punishment without any remorse and never agreed to back-track from his stand. So much so that the doors of the cremation ground were shut on his followers. He instructed them to let the dead bodies be carried away by the flowing waters of the nearby river. He was adamant that whatever was written in Sri Guru Granth Sahib had clearly showcased the life-styles of its believers. He had unflinching faith in the spiritual efficacy and validity of the Sikh scripture. His interpretations of the sacred text were always based on internal evidence. He did not try to approximate Gurmat with the Vedas, Upanishads and other Indian classics to establish the authenticity of the Guru's message. For him the sacred text of his Guru was self-supporting and needed no other crutches to stand upon. He never thought of establishing his leadership in his community by surrendering any part of his puritanic faith. He was firm in his faith that the society around him was going astray and he was giving it the right direction.

In the historical perspective of the Sikh community, Baba Dayal Ji appears to be the first person to have

established the independent nature of the Sikh system of belief and conduct. The majority of Sikh people had emanated from the Hindu stock and if their ancestral beliefs, customs and rites were allowed to continue among the Sikh converts and the worship of the idols of the traditional gods and goddesses were to continue serving their spiritual needs, then the Sikhs could never be differentiated from the Hindus. I am not sure whether the Nirankaris have cared to point out Baba Dayal Ji's contribution in this field but it is quite clear that those who trace the consciousness of Sikh identity to the divisive policy of the British, or the immediate martial requirements of the British rulers, and credit the Singh Sabha Movement with this achievement, may have to revise their opinions if they care to look at Baba Dayal's contribution towards this aspect a bit closely, as the Baba's activities had begun before the British flag began to fly over the Punjab territory.

IV

The movement of self-purification started by Baba Dayal Ji did not spread much beyond the frontiers of Pothohar, while some other reformatory movements which had borrowed some inspiration from the Nirankari Movement, such as the Namdhari and the Singh Sabha Movements, succeeded in occupying the centre-stage. I am not in a position to document reasons for this stalemate but one reason seems to be the delimitation of Baba Ji's focus to the Khatri community of Pothohar. Another reason may be the excessive involvement of the new movement with the past. They had only one direction to look to and it

opened towards their roots, with the result that no time was left for chalking out a common programme for the future development of the whole Sikh community. The *panth* unfortunately remained out of their focus.

Supposing one were to accept the indivisible unity of the Formless Being, bow before none but Sri Guru Granth Sahib and conduct the birth, death and marriage ceremonies as directed by Baba Dayal Ji and his successors, what then would the Sikh community look forward to for its future? Experience and history testifies to the fact that such corruption-free life-styles with copious sprinkling of God's remembrance are not enough to create corporate movements for upward mobility. The Namdharis began with similar clean life-style but they had to undergo extremes of mental and physical suffering because they dared to colour their puritanism with political ambition. If the Singh Sabha Movement had not transformed itself into the Gurdwara Reform or Akali Movement, it should not be difficult for any serious student of history to predict the future that would have been its destiny. The Nirankaris escaped the mental and physical tribulations that the other movements faced for daring to look beyond their present. At present the Nirankari community is small in numbers but is still attached to Sri Guru Granth Sahib and claims that even now the life-style of their members is akin to the original teachings of the great Gurus. This is all well and good but I would ask the elders of this small community one question: is the Nirankari community satisfied with the ideological, moral and cultural condition of the followers

of Sri Guru Granth Sahib living all around them? I have a feeling that had Baba Dayal Ji been alive today he would not have been satisfied with the prevailing situation. It is possible that the members of the Nirankari community are also not satisfied with the life-style of the contemporary Sikh society. If that be the position, then I would like to know what programme the community has devised for the future betterment of their own members and for the whole Sikh Panth in the twenty-first century which has already overtaken us? Are they afraid of their miniscule numerical status as against the massive nature of the problem? If so, I feel like drawing the attention of their leaders to the fact that the shortage of numbers never daunted Baba Dayal Ji from taking up his reformatory mission. He depended on the divine support and regarded himself as good as an army consisting of *sawa lakh* (1,25,000) activists. He was never afraid of the odds against him.

2

WRITINGS ON THE NIRANKARI MOVEMENT

Dharam Singh

I

Most of the historians place the beginning of the Nirankari Movement in 1808, the year in which Baba Dayal, the founder of the movement, shifted from Peshawar to Rawalpindi. The movement was nurtured later by eminent persons like Baba Darbara Singh, Baba Ratta Ji, and Baba Gurdit Singh. The influence of this movement on the socio-religious life of the Sikhs during the nineteenth century went un-noticed. Even in the early decades of the twentieth century, no Sikh historian or scholar wrote about the movement. Its earliest notice was taken by the Christian missionaries of Ludhiana in their Annual Report of 1853-54. In 1861 then, J.H. Orbison visited Rawalpindi especially to observe the Nirankaris and to report on them.

The first writing in Punjabi to talk about the movement was an article in the 'Sikh History Number' of the *Phulwari* (December 1929 - January 1930). Thereafter appeared a number of writings on the Nirankari movement and its leaders. Of these writings, the following have been identified as important :

1. *Mahan Kosh* (1930), by Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha
2. *Nirankari Gurmat Prarambhita* (1951), by Surinder Singh Nirankari

3. *Nirankari Darbar Sandesh* (1954)
4. *Punjab dian Lehran* (1954), by Shamsheer Singh Ashok
5. *Merian Kujh Itihasik Yadan* (1955), by Hira Singh Dard
6. *Bhai Joth Singh Abhinandan Granth* (1962), edited by Ganda Singh
7. *The Panjab Past and Present* (1973) : 'Singh Sabha Number'
8. *The Nirankari Sikhs* (1979), by John C.B. Webster
9. *Sikh Revivalist Movements* (1988), by Surjit Kaur Jolly
10. *Sikh Dharam de Siddhant* (2000), by Dr. Man Singh Nirankari

The article in the 'Sikh History Number' of the *Phulwari* was written by Giani Hira Singh Dard under the title 'Sikh Sudharak Lehar' in which he talked about the Nirankaris, the Namdharis, the Singh Sabhas, and the Akalis. The earliest of these was the Nirankari Movement. The first three pages of the article were devoted to the life of Baba Dayal, the founder of the movement, and its later development. Hira Singh Dard tried to assess the merits and limitations of the movement. He pointed out that its influence was confined to the Pothohar. He says, in fact, that the influence was confined to only 'a part' of the Pothohar. There too it remained confined to Khatri and



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government servants in towns. Furthermore, by using the terms 'Amritsar', 'Tarn Taran', and 'Darbar Sahib' for their own places, the Nirankaris tended to become indifferent to the Sikh places which had served as the source of inspiration for the Sikhs. The baptism of the double-edged sword had inspired them to make sacrifices. It is possible that this was done on principle to minimize the importance of pilgrimage as such, but it tended to increase the importance of the places established by the Nirankaris in their own eyes, and miracles came to be associated with them. Another reason could be that the idols of gods and goddesses were being worshipped in the central Sikh places along with Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikh pilgrims were influenced by these practices. Indeed, though the *pujaris* of these great central places were *keshdhari*, they were dyed in Brahmanical colours. The rites of the Sikhs from birth till death were performed by Brahmans. While talking of the influence of the Nirankaris on the Singh Sabhas, Hira Singh Dard comes to the conclusion that the influence of the Singh Sabha spread rapidly in the Pothohar due to the earlier work of the Nirankaris. The Nirankari preacher Bhai Manna Singh used to reach all places for the propagation of new ideas. This is mentioned by Bhagat Lakshman Singh also in his English autobiography which has been edited by Dr Ganda Singh. The information provided by Hira Singh Dard was used by the later writers in their own way.

Hira Singh Dard himself returned to the Nirankaris in his *Itihasik Yadan* (1955) with reference to his father,

Bhai Hari Singh, and his differences with him. Bhai Hari Singh was a thoughtful and progressive person. He used to work with Bhai Jassa Singh Nirankari of Tarlani. Due to his love and affection and his understanding of Gurbani, Bhai Hari Singh became a Nirankari. In those days the Nirankari movement had just been started in Rawalpindi. It was the first religious movement among the Sikhs. Sahib Darbara Singh had assumed guruship, and the Nirankaris utterly abandoned all Hindu rites like *shraddhas*, *kiryakaram*, pilgrimage to the *Ganga*, worship of idols of gods and goddesses, tombs and sepulchres. The Nirankaris did not participate in marriages performed in accordance with the traditional Brahmanical rituals. Nor did they associate with people who performed such marriages. Hira Singh Dard himself was deeply affected and became a Nirankari. However, he could not bring himself to accept a person as guru, a belief which was cherished by all the Nirankaris. But this belief infringed the Nirankari principle: their own slogan was that all personal *gurus* would suffer ignominy in the end. Thus, the Nirankaris appeared to infringe their own principle. This was his basic difference with his father.

Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha included the term 'Nirankari' in his *Encyclopaedia (Mahan Kosh)*. He referred to Baba Dayal as the founder of the Nirankari Movement, and to Baba Gurdit Singh as his own contemporary. The Nirankaris were seen by Bhai Kahn Singh as a '*firqah*' and a '*sampradaya*' of the Sikhs, and Baba Gurdit Singh as a 'Mahant'. Perhaps because of

the constraints of the *kosh*, Bhai Kahn Singh provided only brief information on the Nirankaris, but even this was not free from mistakes. When it was pointed out to him by the Nirankaris, he wrote a letter in reply, expressing great respect for the Nirankaris for preaching *Gurmaryada* at a time when other Sikhs had become its opponents due to extraneous influences. The story of the difficulties faced by Baba Dayal and the insults borne by him was very moving; it brought tears to the eyes of the listeners. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha went on to add that the Nirankaris were bound to succeed because of their intrinsic qualities as Sikhs. Indeed Bhai Kahn Singh quoted a line from Gurbani in which the wrestler who defeated five others in the wrestling arena was patted on the back by the Guru. In his view, Baba Dayal was one of those great men who live in strict accordance with their convictions and serve as an example for others.

II

Soon after Independence, Surinder Singh Nirankari, son of Baba Hara Singh, gave a detailed account of the Nirankari Movement in his *Nirankari Gurmat Prarambhita*. As the author suggests in the introduction to his book, no historical account of the movement was available at that time. In about two hundred pages he gives detail of the life of the Nirankari leaders and the development of the Nirankari Movement. Detailed information about Baba Dayal, Baba Darbara Singh, and Sahib Ratta Ji, together with the reforms each one of them introduced, forms the early part of the book. It also contains a writing of Giani

Hira Singh Dard who improves upon his account of the movement in the 'Sikh History Number' of the *Phulwari*. Both of his writings appear to have been inspired by the fact that he and his father were Nirankaris. Dard himself says, 'I have been leavened with *Gurmat* in the Nirankari *darbar*. That is why I feel always grateful to them'. Dard goes on to add that his father was perhaps the first or the second Brahman to abandon old superstitions to accept the Nirankari teachings. There are thirteen appendices in the *Nirankari Gurmat Prarambhita* which contain very useful information. They relate to (1) the *Chiththa* of Bhai Rup Singh on Nirankari ethics, (2) the *Parwana (Hukumnama)* of Baba Rattaji, (3) the *Nirankari Ardas*, (4) *Gur-Parnali* of the first five Nirankari leaders, (5) *Bansavali* of Baba Dayal Ji, (6-12) extracts relating to the Nirankari movement and its leaders from English and Punjabi publications like the Census Reports and the *Mahan Kosh*, and (13) a letter of Baba Khem Singh Bedi to his followers. Eulogies written by different poets in praise of the Nirankari leaders are also included in this book. And so too are miracles. The book contains selections from the Nirankari Bhai Kahn Singh Granthi's *Prem Prakash*, a poetical work which itself appears to be worth reprinting. Surinder Singh Nirankari's book served as the basis of information for the later writers.

The foremost Nirankari scholar to write on the movement and its leaders is Dr Man Singh Nirankari. In an article on the Nirankaris in the *Panjab Past and Present* and a later pamphlet he provides information on



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the Nirankari leaders and their work. The deterioration of Sikh belief and practice which occurred in the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh due to his political compromises and compulsions has been depicted in an essay, entitled 'Nirankari Lehar da Sikh Rauh-Ritan de Parivartan vich Yogdan', to bring into high relief the reform brought about by the Nirankari leaders. They faced many difficulties and suffered in many ways. In another essay, relating to the contribution of the Nirankari leaders to the practice of Anand marriage and its recognition through an Act of the Government, the prevalence of the Brahmanical *maryada* of marriage among the Sikhs has been underlined. Dr Nirankari explicitly states that there is no provision of 'punishment' (*tankhah*) against infringement of a specifically Sikh rite of marriage in the *Rahitnamas* attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, which carries the implication that no specific Sikh rite of marriage was expected to be followed by the Sikhs. He gives an account of the Anand marriages performed by the Nirankari leaders from time to time in different towns and cities in order to make the point that the practice of Anand marriage was introduced by the Nirankaris. In yet another essay Dr Nirankari has depicted the influence of the Nirankari movement on the contemporary Sikh Panth. The themes discussed in the *Sikh Dharm de Siddhant* are related directly or indirectly to Sikh institutions, and Sikh *rahit maryada*. The final authority on all these issues for Dr Nirankari is Guru Granth Sahib. Nevertheless, the themes he takes up for exposition need further discussion. One of the limitations of this book is repetition: the same

information is used in several different contexts. A more serious shortcoming is the use of evidence from several works with no information on their authorship or the time of their composition. The *Prem Sumarg Granth* and some other *Rahitnamas* belong to this category.

III

Other writers, both Sikh and non-Sikh, have begun to take interest in the Nirankari Movement after Independence. Shamsheer Singh Ashok took up the Nirankari movement in his *Punjab dian Lehran*. He talks of the religious background and context before giving an account of Baba Dayal, Baba Darbara Singh, and other leaders of the movement. With special reference to *rahit maryada*, he covers the entire period from Guru Nanak to the beginning of the Nirankari movement. He gives detail of the work done by Baba Dayal to lay a firm foundation for the movement. Besides giving detail of the life of Baba Darbara Singh, he underlines his efforts to propagate Gurmat, especially the practice of Anand marriage. Baba Darbara Singh is said to have told Baba Bikram Singh and Khem Singh Bedi that they were working under Brahmanical influences. The role of Baba Rattaji, Baba Gurdit Singh and Baba Hara Singh in carrying the movement forward is mentioned along with the decline of this movement with the growing influence of the Singh Sabhas. Ashok gives the text of the Nirankari Ardas, and points out its difference from the traditional Sikh Ardas. In the second edition of this work which came out in 1974. Ashok refers to the Sant Nirankaris of Delhi and points

out the differences between them and the old Nirankaris.

Surjit Kaur Jolly has discussed the Nirankari and Namdhari movements during the nineteenth century in her *Sikh Revivalist Movements*, published in 1988. Based probably on her doctoral thesis, this book concentrates on the socio-religious dimensions of these movements. The Nirankari movement is treated first as the earlier of the two. The contributions made by its leaders are given in one chapter. In another, she has discussed the religious practices of the Nirankaris, especially the rejection of Brahmanical rites and rituals. She also points out that the Nirankaris held the shoes of Baba Dayal in great respect. In yet another chapter the social problems and concerns of the Nirankaris are discussed, especially the Anand marriage, the status of women, the differences of caste, the rites to be observed at the time of birth and death. The Nirankari leaders did not work for personal gains; they worked for the collective welfare of the people by bringing about socio-religious changes. Their efforts were effective, especially in terms of religious ideas and practices. The rest of the book deals almost exclusively with the Namdhari Movement. Surjit Kaur Jolly appreciates the work done by John C.B. Webster but she does not accept all his views. She thinks that Webster had a preconceived notion. Surjit Kaur Jolly's treatment of the Nirankari Movement is based on research and clarifies several important issues.

Surjit Kaur Jolly has made a good use of *The Nirankari Sikhs* by John C.B. Webster. 'As regards the Nirankari movement', she writes, 'perhaps the only work

worth mentioning is that of John C.B. Webster, entitled *The Nirankari Sikhs*. It is 'a good short survey of the Nirankaris from their inception to the contemporary times. It helps to show, though briefly, the major contributions of the Nirankaris in the field of socio-religious reforms'. Jolly goes on to add that Webster refers to five major sources: the *Hukamnama* of Baba Darbara Singh, the will of Sahib Ratta Ji, the *Prem Prakash*, two letters of Baba Hara Singh and a telegram of Baba Gurdit Singh.

Webster has argued against the use of the term 'movement' in relation to the Nirankaris. He says:

Although it has been customary for historians to refer to the Nirankaris as a movement, this practice is open to serious question. A social movement has been defined as a collective attempt to bring about change in certain social institutions or to create an entirely new order and as 'socially shared demands for change in some aspect of the social order'. This definition would imply that a movement (i) involves collective effort, (ii) is assertive, perhaps aggressive, in seeking to bring about change, and (iii) has some impact or influence even if it is not successful in changing any part of the social order. Of these three characteristics of a movement, only the first would apply to the Nirankaris, as they have had a collective life, although in a loosely organised form. Only in the case of Baba Dayal and Baba Darbara Singh do we find evidence of the Nirankaris being assertive and conflict-producing;



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since that time they seem to have been very peaceful and quiet. There is no evidence that they sought to change the social order, in whole or in part, and, indeed, their influence or impact upon the social order has been negligible. Thus, they could not be called a social movement.

Webster differs from other scholars on the beginning of the Nirankari activity. All the historians, including Dr Ganda Singh, regard the migration of Baba Dayal from Peshawar to Rawalpindi in 1808 as the beginning of the Nirankari movement, but John Webster places its beginning in 1943-45. Surjit Kaur Jolly has tried to refute Webster on this and some other points.

From this brief survey of literature on the Nirankaris it becomes clear that historians, biographers and other scholars have continued to discuss and assess the contribution of the Nirankaris in the religious and social fields. It may be hoped that Nirankari studies would grow further in the future.

3

THE MAN OF THE HOUR**Harnam Singh Shan**

Baba Dayal (1783-1855) was a gifted Man of God, blessed not only with saintliness but also with a heroic spirit and a radical bent of mind. Though a devout Sikh of utter humility, he was a true hero as exemplified in Guru Granth Sahib:¹

In this age, he alone is called a true hero
who is dyed in the love of the Lord.

He, by the grace and guidance of the True Guru,
conquers his own self and subdues, thereby,
all else.

I

Dayal Das turned out to be a man of the hour at a very critical juncture in the history of Sikh religion and heritage. He appeared at a time when the Sikhs had secured political independence of their homeland and established their sovereignty under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839). But due to their occupation with battles, conquests and consolidation of power, and owing to some other allied circumstances, they lost their grip on the religious purity and pristine glory of their very young religion against the incisive onslaught of the age-old Brahmanism.

Meaningless superstitions, false beliefs and un-Sikh practices corrupted the social and religious spheres of the Sikh society. All sorts of rites, rituals, customs and ceremonies of the Brahmanical Hinduism, which had been prohibited by the Sikh Gurus, crept into the Sikh way of life. The Brahman priest guided and dominated all functions in and outside their households. Idol-worship was reintroduced on such high scale that images of mythical gods and goddesses were installed in Gurdwaras, even in the precincts of Harimandar Sahib, the holiest Sikh shrine at Amritsar to be worshipped along with Guru Granth Sahib. The observance of such un-Sikh precepts and practices gave rise to tendencies which implied reversion to the Hindu fold.

As power produced wealth and wealth irreligiousness, the rot set in from the top, in the Sikh royalty, aristocracy and the landed gentry. The Hindu caste system held its sway and the lower Sikh castes continued to face humiliation and discrimination. The abominable Hindu custom of *sati*, expressly forbidden by the Sikh Gurus, came into vogue. So much so that several wives of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his son Maharaja Kharak Singh, and grandson Kanwar Naunihal Singh, were cremated with each of them in full public gaze.

The heads of the Bedi and Sodhi families, to which the Sikh Gurus had belonged, assumed the airs of undue superiority. They projected themselves as spiritual preceptors and custodians of Sikh religion and ethics. They enjoyed nearly half of the State *dharamarth* grants

and revived worship of personal *gurus*, (*dehdhari puja*) which had been discarded by the Sikh Gurus. According to Major Leach, they were practising all moral and immoral means to promote their own interests. They were developing principalities of their own.²

They, and some other religious leaders of the community, were steeped in Brahmanical lore; they observed Brahmanical rituals and performed Brahmanical ceremonies. Most of the Sikhs revived their belief in astrologers, soothsayers and casters of horoscopes, and in all sorts of superstitions from which their Gurus had extricated them. Reviewing the contemporary scene, *The Tribune* stated even in 1885: 'The catholic principles which Guru Granth Sahib inculcates are known but to a few and clouds of prejudices and superstitions have spread over the horizon of the Sikh religion'.³

Such a grave and sorrowful situation called for the emergence of a dedicated soul, a staunch believer in the Sikh faith, and a bold and brave person who could stem the tide and check the rot by recreating awareness of the real, fundamental and universal teachings of Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Granth Sahib, and by reviving the community's faith in them, and by making it proud of its glorious heritage. He came forward in the person of Baba Dayal and proved to be the man of the hour who took up the hard uphill task of religious reformation and social regeneration with a missionary's spirit and a reformer's zeal.

II

Baba Dayal lost his father, Bhai Ram Sahai, at a very early age, and was brought up in the Sikh tradition by his pious mother, Ladikki, a grand-daughter of Bhai Bhagwan Singh who had served Guru Gobind Singh as a treasurer at Anandpur Sahib. She too died soon after, and the boy was left all alone. But he was inspired enough to serve the cause of the Gurus, to adopt and project the way of life they had preached and practised.⁴ Shifting from Peshawar to Rawalpindi, he started his mission single-handed by expounding the teachings of the Sikh Gurus as embodied in Guru Granth Sahib in a local Gurdwara, called Pishaurian di Dharamsal.

Baba Dayal was a man of vision. He realized at the very outset that Sikhism could be preserved in all its purity and originality only by its complete break from the Brahmanical dominance which was eating its vitals in all respects. He, therefore, sought to lift the Sikhs out of this 'rut of meaningless ritual and degrading superstition, and to return them to the pure religion of their original scriptures'.⁵ With that objective in view, he began with the inculcation of faith in God, the One Formless Lord (*Nirankar*), constant repetition of His name, and meditation on Him alone. This was in consonance with the basic teachings of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith. The two very typical and expressive names of God for Guru Nanak were Kartar (the Creator) and Nirankar (the Formless). Addressing God in his own characteristic way, Guru Nanak says:⁶

Your name, O God, is 'The Formless One'.

By dwelling on it one does not go to hell.

When he founded a town he named it Kartarpur (the abode of the Creator); it became his own abode during the last and the most momentous phase of his life. This characteristic epithet became so popular that, according to the first non-Sikh contemporary writer on Sikhism, his sons came to be known as *kartari*.⁷

The contemporary Christian missionaries and government officials bear witness to the importance attached to Nirankar by Baba Dayal. J.H. Morrison says in 1853 that *Nirankar* means incorporeal, and *Nirankari* means one who believes in God to be an incorporeal being. He never becomes incarnate, and they take their name from Nirankar. 'They are called *Nirankaris* from their belief in God as a spirit without bodily form'.⁸ E.B. MacLagan reiterates this in 1891: 'The word *Nirankar* means properly, "The Formless", and it was a term commonly used by Baba Nanak as an equivalent of the Deity; he was at first known as *Nanak Nirankari*'. The *Nirankaris* were followers of the Formless God 'after the manner of Baba Nanak'.⁹ Baba Dayal re-emphasized the faith in Guru Granth Sahib, and urged every Sikh to believe it to be their only sacred scripture as well as their Guru Eternal. Morrison had recorded in 1853:

They professedly reject all idolatry, and all reverence and respect for whatever is held sacred by Sikhs or Hindus, except Nanak and his Granth...

They regard Nanak as their Saviour, in as much as he taught them the way of salvation... The plan of salvation as proposed by them is by simple meditation on the Supreme Being.

Bhai Dayal Das began to be reverently called Baba Dayal by his followers who rejected belief in all gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. He himself condemned the claims of all those persons who set themselves up as 'gurus'. He even gave the following new congregational slogan to the people:

Jappo piario! 'Dhan Nirankar'

Jo dehdhari sabhe khuar

That is, 'say O dear, "all glory to the Formless One"; all corporeal ones are perishable'. This became his watchword and the basis of his objection to obeisance to the so-called '*babas*', which provoked considerable opposition to him and his mission. Baba Dayal emphasized faithful adherence to the tenets enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib, ensuring thereby its primacy in the Sikh system and its central role in all Sikh rituals and way of life. He therefore, enjoined his followers to seek in its hymns spiritual and moral direction as well as the fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations.

Baba Dayal was determined to revive the Sikh faith in its pristine glory, to retrieve the essence of its founder's creed, and to restore the purity of belief and practice and the sanctity of its shrines. He sought to rid Sikh religion and culture of all Brahmanical accretions. He, therefore,

preached relentlessly against all encroachments of Brahmanical Hinduism on the life and thought of the Sikhs. He disapproved of all those rites, rituals and ceremonies which were violative of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib. His heart-felt concern was the upkeep of the Sikh tradition; he declared as taboo all that smacked of Brahmanism. So, he denounced the feasting of Brahmans, offering food to the dead ancestors, observing *pardah*, going on pilgrimage, and recitation of Vedic *mantras* and other Hindu lore. He preached, instead, the reading and hearing of the recitation of the hymns of Guru Granth Sahib and joining Sikh congregations in Gurdwaras during the morning service in the holy presence of Guru Granth Sahib. He laid great emphasis on moral values as taught by the Sikh Gurus through both precept and practice. 'His aim thus seems to have been to bring Sikh ritual into conformity with Sikh teaching as found in the Adi Granth'.¹⁰ Believing the attainment of salvation through meditation on God, he exhorted Sikhs to worship none other than the holy Word enshrined therein, and repeat Nirankar as His Name.

Baba Dayal's preaching and performance was no less radical in the social sphere of the Sikh community. He preached against unwholesome and un-Sikh social customs. As he was apprehensive of its merger into Hinduism, he challenged all those rites and ceremonies which showed relapse into Hinduism. In order to wean the Sikhs away from the Brahmanical influence and usages, he re-emphasized the performance of Sikh ceremonies



Break from the Seminar

based on the teachings of the Sikh Gurus who themselves were householders and practical reformers. He assailed the superstitious observances of the Sikh orthodoxy which, according to him, was undermining the Sikh tradition and degrading the Sikh ethos. Use of alcohol and tobacco was prohibited. Marking a complete departure from the Hindu tradition, he made it a point to base Sikh ceremonies, particularly those related to birth, marriage and death, on Guru Granth Sahib instead of the Hindu scriptures. He dispensed with the Brahman priests who used to conduct all rites in the Sikh households; he enjoined their performance by the Sikhs themselves.

As far as the marriage ceremony was concerned, Baba Dayal, in a way, revolutionised it by initiating its reformation in his own case. He got it solemnised in a simple and straightforward manner in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib instead of mumbling of Vedic *mantras*, shunning thus all rites and superstitions associated with it. He forbade mourning on the demise of a Sikh, whether young or old, and urged Sikhs to stop offering food to the dead. Being an ideal householder himself, Baba Dayal lived his life in the service of the Guru and his community, acting upon the basic command of the message of Guru Nanak: 'worship, work and share'.

Instead of living on the offerings of his followers, he set up a grocer's shop before starting his preaching at Rawalpindi. While running it, he exhorted people, in general, and his followers in particular to 'speak truthfully and weigh rightfully' (*sach bolo, pura tolo*). He pronounced

that lying, cheating and using false weights were 'particularly heinous crimes'.¹¹ Baba Dayal continued his preaching for forty long year, during the first half of the nineteenth century. He had to face stiff opposition, virulent criticism and relentless oppression of the orthodox Hindu and Sikh forces. He had to fight all along against heavy odds.

His radical campaign against the worship of gods and goddesses and observance of Brahmanical ritual and ceremonies offended many people. His tirade against the un-Sikh practices of Sikhs invited strong protests from the local community. The 'orthodox' Sikhs and the Mahants and Pujaris of various Gurdwaras became furious, boycotted him and threw him one day out of the Gurdwara. The Bedi descendants of Guru Nanak, who considered his thunderblast against human gurus a challenge to their hegemony, became inimical. All of them joined in ostracizing him and his followers. They cut off their matrimonial relations and did not allow them to use the community's cremation grounds. Even litigation was started against him in the courts.

Baba Dayal faced all that heroically. He moved outside the town, purchased a piece of land and set up a Gurdwara of his own to propagate his mission with added zeal and vigour. His campaign took the form of a movement, called the Nirankari Movement, and his Gurdwara at Rawalpindi became the headquarters of the order he founded. His following increased and the title *Baba* was a recognition of his new status. However, his opponents

became all the more jealous and hostile. When he passed away on 30 January 1855, they reported to the local officials that 'he had been socially boycotted by the people of the city and if his body was taken to the common crematorium, there might be some disturbance of peace. To avoid this, a prohibitory order was issued by the Deputy Commissioner.¹² Baba Darbara Singh, the eldest son of Baba Dayal, had already decided to entrust the dead body to the running waters of the Layee rivulet, running beside the town. Thus did pass away 'the first Sikh Protestant' who bravely fought all his life 'against all that smacked of Brahmanical ritualism and superstition, 'the very negative of the Sikh way of life'.

III

Baba Dayal sagaciously resisted the subtle and serious approaches of the Christian missionaries who visited him and his Gurdwara a number of times. J.H. Morrison reported in 1853:¹³

Again I went to their *Dharam Sala*, and the old Padri (i.e. Baba Dayal) tried a new plan with me. It was to keep quiet and not object to anything I said, or allow any one else either to object or to ask a question. This was very difficult to carry out, for his people were not willing to leave my arguments and preaching unanswered. But still he persisted in trying to keep them silent, by arguing thus with them: All the gentleman says is perfectly true – why should you object or argue? Christ is his Saviour, and Nanak is ours; let each one cling to his own religion?

I then took up that point, and drew a contrast between Christ and Nanak, to show that the latter was not and could not be a saviour for them or any one else. To this he replied that such as he was they would stick to him, even if he went to hell.

Similarly, Orbison had this to report in 1861:¹⁴

The Nirankarees pride themselves much on being free from idolatry, and being purer and better than Hindus, Mohammedans, and other Sikhs. But in vain I tried to convince them that it was wrong and idolatrous to bow to the Granth. They make the excuse that the Name of God is in the book, and it is only reverence for this Name which causes them to bow thus. On further intercourse and inquiry, I found that they consider themselves to be the true followers of Nanak and the Granth, and hence the true orthodox Sikhs, and not a new sect. When I preached Christ to them, they replied, 'Nanak will save us, he is our Mediator'. From this, it appears that they have not made much progress in reformation, and, indeed, they are not much more inclined to embrace Christianity than others.

Baba Dayal brought about amazing awareness and socio-religious awakening among the Sikhs against the inroads of the votaries of Christianity under such hard and hostile circumstances.

According to Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha, Baba Dayal initiated the first 'Sikh puritan movement' with the

object of stemming the tide of Hinduism; he upheld the tenets and traditions of Sikhism at a time when the Sikhs were going astray 'on account of alien influence'.¹⁵ According to Khushwant Singh, Baba Dayal 'inculcated among the Sikhs a sense of separateness and thus checked the process of their absorption into Hinduism'.¹⁶ Above all, the Nirankari Movement was 'the first organized attempt made by the Sikhs to improve their way of life and socio-religious system'. It turned out to be the precursor of the Sikh renaissance under the banner of the Singh Sabha Movement.

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Dr. Kirpal Singh Reading his Key - Note on the 55

4

A PIONEER SIKH REFORMER**KIRPAL SINGH****I**

For a proper perspective on the movement initiated by Baba Dayal, it will not be out of place to analyse the socio-religious conditions of the Sikhs before the advent of Baba Dayal. Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa on 29 March in 1699 and the entire community plunged into warfare against the tyranny of hill rajas and the Mughal government. Guru Gobind Singh had to migrate to Nanded in the South where he was martyred in 1708. For the spread of Khalsa tenets and the principles of Sikh movement which had culminated in the creation of the Khalsa, long spell of peace was required. But it was followed by the most critical period of Sikh history. Banda Singh Bahadur's uprising was followed by severe repression. Sikh heads used to carry price. The eye-witness account of Tahmas Khan authenticates how the Sikhs were hunted down during the tyrannical days of Mir Mannu (1748-53). This was followed by ruthless persecution by Ahmad Shah Abdali who massacred nearly twenty thousand Sikhs in a single day, on 5 February 1762. The event is still known as Ghallughara (bloody carnage). In this hard struggle for existence the Sikhs could not pay adequate attention to the socio-religious reforms initiated by the Sikh Gurus. The military genius of Maharaja Ranjit Singh built a vast empire within a single generation, which was very

creditable. But he left the socio-religious reforms in the hands of the Udasi and other Mahants, with the result that the socio-religious condition of the Sikhs became deplorable. The Sikh religion lost its puritanism. All rites, ceremonies, and rituals of Brahmans were reintroduced in the Sikh homes and more particularly among the landed gentry. Idols were installed inside Gurdwaras, where obeisance to Guru Granth Sahib was performed simultaneously with idol worship. Among the royalty it was the Brahman priest who dominated all functions. When Ranjit Singh fell seriously ill, most of the donations went to the Brahmans, and all kinds of *puja* were undertaken. Sometime before his death, Maharaja Ranjit Singh made up his mind to present the Koh-i Nur to the temple of Jagannath at Puri. It was with great difficulty and much pressure that the paralytic Maharaja could be dissuaded from making the gift.

II

Baba Dayal was born at Peshawar in 1783. His father Ram Sahai was running a shop and had migrated from Kabul. He was brought up under the guidance of his religiously devoted mother, Bibi Ladikki, who was a granddaughter of Bhai Bhagwan Singh, in charge of the *golak* (treasury) of Guru Gobind Singh. Baba Dayal was the only child of his parents. His noble mother taught him reading and writing Gurmukhi. He lost his father and mother at a very tender age. While leaving for her heavenly abode, Bibi Ladikki called her son by her side and advised him to lead his life in a Sikh way, to get up early in the morning

and to go to Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh after taking bath, to read Gurbani, and to believe only in One God. The boy acted upon the advice of his mother. He would pluck some flowers from a nearby garden and place them before the Holy Granth Sahib (while paying to the gardener).

Baba Dayal started a grocer's shop at Rawalpindi when he was about nineteen years old. He expounded the Sikh faith to the exclusion of all sorts of superstitions. He advised not to lament, cry or beat the breasts when a Sikh died. He advocated widow remarriage. Baba Dayal dedicated his entire life to the reform of society and to save the Sikh religion from the evils of Brahmanism that had crept in. Since the teachings of Baba Dayal were directly against the Brahmanical ways, his growing popularity soon created jealousy. The Brahmans and the orthodox people came forth to oppose him. They had probably their own axe to grind. Sardar Nihal Singh Chhachhi, who was later knighted by the British Government, and a Khatri named Tauro Rai, proved to be the staunchest opponents. They called Baba Ji and charged him thus: 'You wash the dirty feet of the people with water and do not believe in the superiority of Brahmans. You condemn gods and goddesses, therefore, we ask you to give up these practices and pay a penalty in giving us a meal'. Baba Ji replied, 'I am a Guru's Sikh and do what I am taught by him. I have committed no crime, hence, I do not accept your penalty'. They ordered his excommunication from the society, and forbade him and his few followers to enter Gurdwaras and to draw water

from the wells. They threatened him that the cremation of his dead body in the common cremation ground would not be allowed.

The following incident illustrates the boldness of Baba Dayal. Two brothers, both followers of Baba Dayal, invited Thakur Diwan Singh to dinner. The invitation was accepted. The whole night was spent in making preparation for the dinner. The next morning, as ill luck would have it, one of the brothers fell ill and died suddenly, and the tragic event upset the dinner arrangements. The surviving brother went to Diwan Singh and informed him of the tragedy and Diwan Singh tauntingly remarked, 'The dead body is in your house. How can I accept such a dinner? Ordinarily, the food in such cases remains polluted for thirteen days but for the eminent saints like me it remains polluted for twenty-one days'. Accordingly the dinner was refused. When Baba Dayal came to know of it, he ordered the food to be brought to the congregation which he was addressing. After the cremation was over the dinner was served in the *sangat*. Baba Dayal on this occasion quoted the following *shabad* of Guru Nanak:¹

All impurity consists in doubt and attachment to duality.

Birth and death are by the Lord's command:

Through His Will mortals come and go

Eating and drinking are pure.

For He gives sustenance to all.

Nanak, no impurity attaches to the enlightened followers of the Guru.

On account of the acute opposition of the orthodox people of Rawalpindi, the doors of Gurdwara Pishaurian were shut on Baba Dayal. He selected a retiring place for himself about four miles from the city on the bank of the stream Layee. Baba Ji passed away in 1855 at the age of 72 and his body was entrusted to the running waters of the Layee at the place he selected. That place came to be called Dayalsar.

Baba Dayal was succeeded by his son Baba Darbara Singh who carried on the crusade against idolatry and ritualism. His main achievement was to popularize Anand marriage which was not performed by a Brahman. He died in 1870. He was succeeded by his younger brother Ratta Ji who inspired the Tikka of Nabha and Sir Sunder Singh Majithia to get the Anand Marriage Act passed by the Government of India.

III

It is very important to understand the nature of the Nirankari Movement. According to Rose, the term Nirankar (formless) is old in Sikhism, dating back to Guru Nanak himself who was originally called Nanak Nirankari. The sect, however, was a modern one, having been founded by one Bhai Dayal, a Khatri of Peshawar who established it at Rawalpindi. 'The Nirankaris worship one invisible God as a spirit who is hearer of a prayer, avoiding idols, and making no offerings to them, to Brahmins or to the dead.

They abstain from all flesh and liquor and reverence truth. Pilgrimages are regarded as useless. Neither Brahmins nor cows are to be revered. The first day of each month is to be kept holy by attendance at the temple reading the Granth, repentance for sin and almsgiving. The Adi Granth of Baba Nanak is their sacred book though they also respect the later Gurus and their writings'. The Nirankaris inculcated belief in transmigration of souls, and reverence and honour towards parents. Lying, cheating and using false weights were particularly heinous crimes. Smoking was forbidden'.²

The oldest reference to the Nirankaris in English is the report of the Ludhiana Mission for the year 1853-54. It states that 'the whole movement was the result of the efforts of an individual to establish a new panth (religious sect), of which he should be the instructor and guide. The sect has been in existence eight or ten years. They professedly reject all idolatry, and all reverence and respect for whatever is held sacred by Sikhs or Hindus, except Nanak and his Granth. The Hindus complain that they even give abuse to the cow. This climax of impiety could not be endured and it was followed by some street disturbances. Here perhaps we find the secret of their interest in Christianity which was evidently not real. They are called Nirankaris. from their belief in God, as a spirit without bodily form. The next great fundamental principle of their religion is, that salvation is to be obtained by meditation on God. They regard Nanak as their saviour, in as much as he taught them the way of salvation. Of their

peculiar practices only two things were learned. First they assemble every morning for worship, which consists of bowing the head to the ground before the Granth, making offerings and in the hearing the Granth and by one of their number, and explained also if their leader be present. Secondly, they do not burn their dead, because that would assimilate them to the Hindus; nor bury them, because that would make them too much like Christians and Musulmans, but throw them into the river'.³

According to J.H. Orbison, the Nirankaris were 'an interesting sect'. He never met with any of them anywhere else. 'This new religion or sect had its origin in Rawalpindi, about forty or fifty years ago. The founder Guru Dayal Dass, died only four or five years ago after the mission work was commenced here. He taught his followers to give up idolatry and caste, and worship the one living and true God, who is without form, or image, or parts, and hence called Nirankar. It was at one time thought that the worshippers of Nirankar would be very favourably inclined to embrace Christianity. For a time they were persecuted by Hindus and Mohammedans. In order to form their acquaintance, and make them acquainted with the gospel, I have visited their Dharamsala, that is, religious house or place of worship. It is entered from the street by a fine lofty gateway of brick masonry, above the arch of which there is an inscription in the Gurmukhi language on a tablet set in the wall, and covered with glass'. The Nirankaris prided themselves much on being free from idolatry, and 'being purer and better than Hindus, Mohammedans and other

Sikhs'. Orbison tried to convince them that it was wrong and idolatrous to bow to Guru Granth, but in vain. They argued that the name of God was in the book, and it was only reverence for this name which caused them to bow thus. On further inquiry, he found that they considered themselves to be 'the true followers of Nanak and the Granth, and hence, the true orthodox Sikhs, and not a new sect'. They regarded Guru Nanak to be Saviour and Mediator. 'From this, it appears that they have not made much progress in reformation, and, indeed they are not much more inclined to embrace Christianity than others. There are several hundred of them in this city, perhaps four or five hundred, and a few scattered in some of the neighbouring towns. Perhaps this movement may be considered as another struggle of the human mind towards the true and a pure religion'.⁴

In the *Census Report* of 1881, the Nirankaris are mentioned as representing 'the purists of the Sikh religion'. The preaching of their founder was directed 'rather against religious ceremonies than against social and caste institutions'. He taught that 'the Gurus are to be revered only as a high priest of one single and invisible God, that the Hindu deities are not divine, that pilgrimages and offerings are useless and Brahmans and cows are not to be revered, and that animal life is to be scrupulously respected and use of flesh as food abandoned'.⁵

In the *Census Report* of 1891, the Nirankaris are mentioned as 'a remarkable outcome of the doctrines of Nanak in modern times'. The word 'Nirankar' meant 'the

formless' and it was commonly used by Guru Nanak for God. He was at first known as 'Nanak Nirankari', and it is not impossible 'that some of the many persons who have returned themselves as Nirankaris mean little more by this than that they are followers of the Foamless God after the manner of Baba Nanak'. In the specimens which were issued to show how the schedules should be filled in, there was a case of a Sikh whose sect was Nirankari. A slavish imitation of the examples led to a considerable inflation of the returns. 'The sect known by this name is, however, in fact one of considerable size, and it is worth noticing as one of the latest developments of Nanak's teaching'. It was observed that the Nirankaris worshipped God as a spirit only, avoiding the worship of idols. They abstained strictly from flesh and wine, and paid strict adherence to the truth of all things.

Their only sacred book is the Adi-granth of Baba Nanak, to which they pay very particular reverence, though they also respect the later Granth and the subsequent Gurus of the Sikhs. Their marriages are not performed according to the Hindu Dharamshastras, and the bride and bridegroom instead of circumambulating the sacred fire, walk round the Adi-granth. The ceremony is conducted not by a Brahmin but by a granthi and the fiancée or bride sits in public with her face uncovered. Widow marriage is allowed, and some fifty such marriages have taken place among them during the last ten years. Similarly, at funerals, they

dispense with the Brahmans, and the Hindu ceremonial generally; instead of weeping and mourning, they sing hymns, and look on the even rather as an occasion of rejoicing.⁶

IV

John C.B. Webster has made the following comment :

Although it has been customary for historians to refer to the Nirankaris as a movement, this practice is open to serious question. A social movement has been defined as a collective attempt to bring about change in certain social institutions or to create an entirely new order and as 'socially shared demands for change in some aspect of the social order'. These definitions would imply that a movement (i) involves collective effort, (ii) is assertive, perhaps aggressive, in seeking to bring about change, and (iii) has some impact or influence even if it is not successful in changing any part of the social order. Of these three characteristics of a movement, only the first would apply to the Nirankaris as they have had a collective life, although in a loosely organised form. Only in the case of Baba Dayal and Baba Darbara Singh do we find evidence of the Nirankaris being assertive and conflict – producing; since that time they seem to have been very peaceful and quiet. There is no evidence that they sought to change the social order, in whole or in part, and, indeed,

their influence or impact upon the social order has been negligible. Thus, they could not be called a social movement.⁷

It is true that Baba Dayal had no intention of founding a new sect, but it is not valid to hold the view that he started no movement.

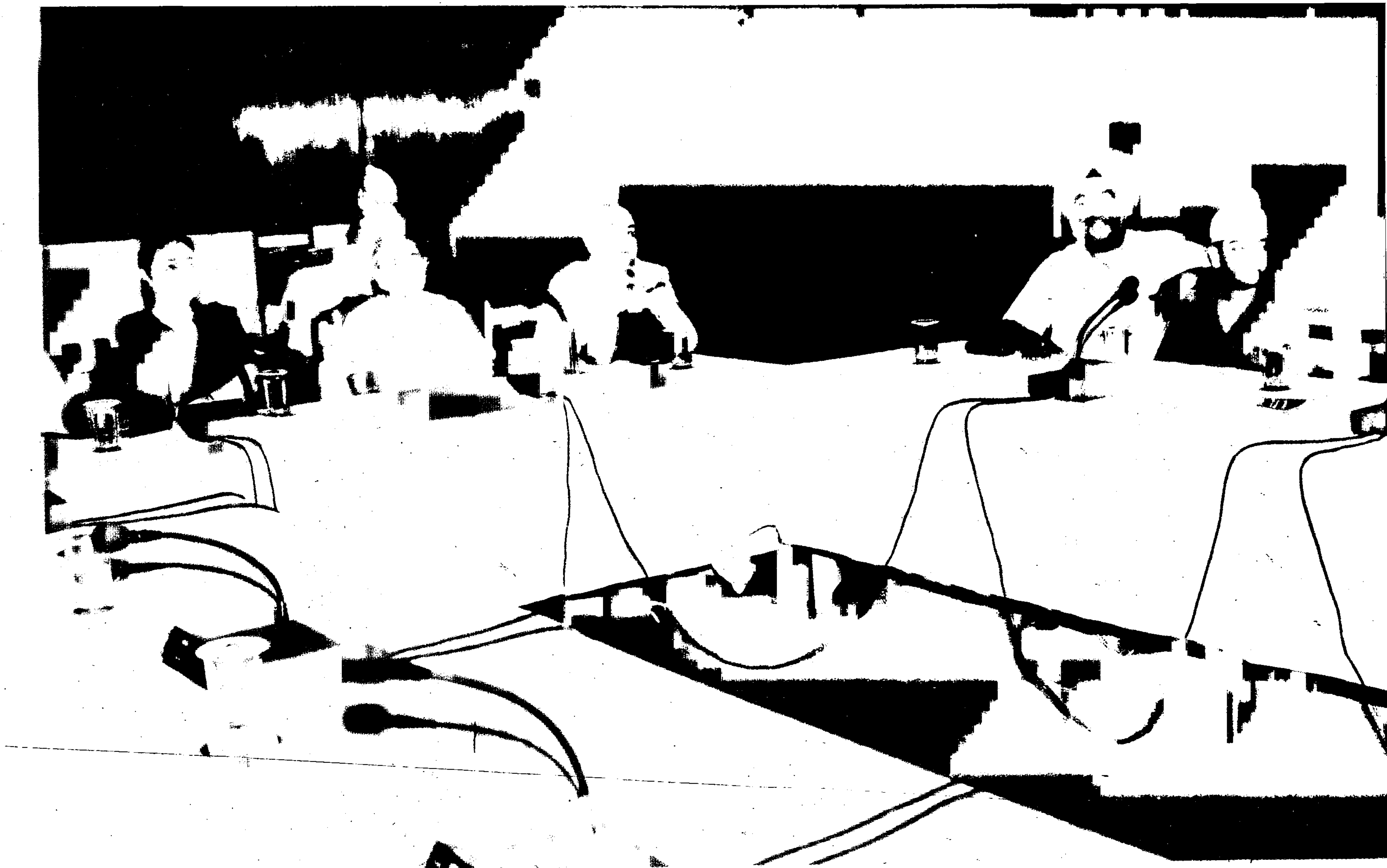
According to Teja Singh, when there are two parties at variance in religion and their dissensions perpetuate, they give rise to sects. There were no dissensions in the case of the Nirankaris. Baba Dayal wanted to revive and purify Sikhism from Brahmanical influence. Moreover, when any organisation which had faith in the fundamental principle of Sikhism – the spiritual unity of the Ten Gurus and eternal Guru Granth Sahib – it cannot have permanent dissensions. With the principle that the Guru is eternal, an ever lasting personality guiding the Sikhs, there can hardly be any sect in Sikhism. 'There shall be one Guru, one word and only one interpretation'. In this way Nirankaris are part and parcel of Sikhism.⁸

The Nirankaris made collective effort to reform the Sikh society which was drifting towards Brahmanism. They were assertive, and appointed a number of *biradars* to preach social reform. Bhai Manna Singh has been mentioned by Bhagat Lakshman Singh as a Nirankari preacher in his autobiography. If the movement is to be judged by its achievements, it was successful : its efforts resulted in the Anand Marriage Act. Moreover, it was the harbinger of the Singh Sabha Movement which adopted

the programme of socio-religious reform initiated by the Nirankaris. Thus, the Nirankaris formed a socio-religious movement and its founder Baba Dayal proved to be a pioneer Sikh reformer.

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View of the Audience

15

**AN INTERPRETER OF THE
EARLY SIKH TRADITION****J.S. Grewal**

This short paper on Baba Dayal is divided into three sections. In the first, we take up John C.B. Webster's monograph on the *Nirankari Sikhs* for his observations on the nature of the available evidence and his understanding of Baba Dayal on the basis of that evidence. In the second section we try to form our own perspective on Baba Dayal to suggest that his mission can be best understood as an interpretation of the early Sikh tradition. In the third section we dwell on the essential strength and the relative limitation of Baba Dayal's interpretation of the early Sikh tradition.

We may also point out that 'the problem of faith and history' has been debated and discussed in the West for more than two centuries. In Sikh studies too this problem arose with the rise of modern historical writings on the Sikhs in the late eighteenth century. However, the Sikh scholars became aware of it only in the twentieth century and, recently, a few of them have expressed the view that the methods of historical research are not suitable for the study of religion. The claims of history and the claims of faith are not necessarily exclusive of each other, depending upon our conception of history and our conception of faith. In fact, the historical approach can highlight the real

strength of a religious tradition. What is necessary to understand is that the pursuit of historical knowledge, like the matters of faith, involves the question of conscience and ethics. As a Western theologian puts it, there is 'a certain morality of knowledge'.¹ 'Knowledge' and 'belief' cannot be equated, though the two are not necessarily antagonistic to each other. The function of history in our view is not to undermine a religious tradition but to understand the sources of its strength for dealing with the serious problems of life. In order to do this one does not have to belong to the faith one studies.

I

As a critical historian of the Nirankaris, John C.B. Webster noted that the first problem he faced was the paucity of source materials. This paucity raises the question of how to evaluate and interpret the available source materials. For Baba Dayal, the earliest sources come from the Christian missionaries who met Baba Dayal in Rawalpindi and observed the activity of his followers. One of these was J.H. Morrison who had graduated from Princeton College in 1834 and Princeton Theological Seminary in 1837, and served as a missionary in north India for over a decade before he visited Baba Dayal in 1853. The tone of his report on the Nirankaris and the description of his own behaviour indicate that 'he was probably the most aggressive and even combative member of the Lodiana Mission'. There is a 'strong bias' in his report but he does provide 'a lot of useful details about basic Nirankari beliefs, about some of their practices, and about their

strained relations with the Hindu community'. The second missionary was James Henry Orbison who had graduated from Jefferson College in 1846 and Princeton Theological Seminary in 1850 before he was posted to Rawalpindi. He was opposed to religious controversy, and his account appears to be based more on observation than argument with the Nirankaris. 'Its value lies in the abundance of descriptive detail concerning the Nirankari *dharamsala* and Nirankari worship'. The later evidence does not add appreciably to our information on Baba Dayal. The second major problem in studying the Nirankaris is that of finding a label for them. John Webster chose the label 'Nirankari Sikhs' and argued that neither 'movement' nor 'sect', neither 'community' nor 'cult' was quite appropriate. However, 'cult' was better than the other terms because it highlights 'shared rites and ceremonies', and does not carry overtones of being a closed group.²

John Webster's understanding of Baba Dayal's position was based almost entirely on the earliest evidence. Contemporary sources are silent about the date of his birth, his marriage, his move from Peshawar to Rawalpindi, and virtually 'all the details of his life'. In 1853 he was an old man, exercising considerable authority over his followers. He died a couple of years later in 1855. The missionary observers give the impression that 'the man was less important than his message'. The basic features of his message are clear: belief in one formless God (Nirankar), and rejection of belief in Hindu deities and the practice of idol worship; salvation through meditation on

God, expressed chiefly through the Nirankari practice of meeting daily for morning worship in the Dharamsala; belief in the Guruship of Nanak and the *Adi Granth*. Apart from the morning worship, the missionaries underline that the Nirankaris were distinguished from others by their manner of disposing of their dead: 'They do not bury their dead because the Musalmans and Christians do so. They will not burn them because that would assimilate them too much to the Hindus. They therefore throw them into the water'. The number of Nirankaris in the time of Baba Dayal was very small and they had to face opposition from others. They were clearly regarded as Sikh, though it is not clear whether Baba Dayal's aims were 'simply reformist or separatist and sectarian'. He does not seem to have departed from the teachings of Guru Nanak. Moreover, the *Adi Granth* played a central role in Nirankari ritual and teaching. Baba Dayal and the Nirankaris appear to have stood firmly within the Sikh tradition from the outset. Baba Dayal was 'an innovator' in the eyes of his contemporaries in the area of religious ceremony: he seems to have rejected several rites in current usage and substituted new ones. It was in terms of ritual rather than doctrine that Baba Dayal was a radical, if not an innovator. 'His aim thus seems to have been to bring Sikh ritual into conformity with Sikh teaching as found in the *Adi Granth*'.³

John Webster does not fail to mention Morrison's remark that Baba Dayal was 'evidently determined to be a great guru, and the leader of a new sect, by which his name will be handed over to posterity'. Significantly, Baba

Dayal was succeeded by his eldest son, Darbara Singh. Morrison also insisted that the Nirankaris did 'in fact worship the Granth just as much as and in the same way as the other Sikhs do. They wave over it the chauri, bow down to it with the forehead touching the ground, and present their offerings before it just as other Sikhs do'. However, the Nirankaris maintained that they did not 'worship the book but the word it contains'. The annual report of 'the Lodian Mission', based largely on Morrison's account of the Nirankaris, mentions that the Hindus complained of the irreverent attitude of the Nirankaris towards the cow, which led to some street disturbances and brought the parties into civil courts. Orbison's report of 1861 mentions that the Nirankaris were taught to give up caste as well as idolatry, that they regarded themselves as better than other Sikhs as well as Hindus and Muslims; and that they regarded themselves as orthodox Sikhs and not a new sect.⁴

II

What more can we say about Baba Dayal and his mission on the basis of the meagre evidence that we have? We may turn first of all to the earliest Nirankari evidence, the Nirankari Hukamnama. Addressed to all Sikhs, it refers to Baba Dayal as 'Sri Satguru Dayal ji'. Its opening paragraph runs as follows:

Once Satguru Dayal visited the abode of the Formless One. A *divan* (congregation) was in progress. All the ten gurus from Guru Nanakji

onward were seated there. The whole assembly stood up. Then it was ordered thus: 'O man of the Formless One, go hence to instruct all the Sikhs in [true] conduct. All Sikhs who have been up to the time of the ten Gurus are entrusted to you'. Satguru Dayal then asked, what authority have I [to discharge this commission]?' At which it was decreed: 'O man, whosoever obeys you shall attain liberation and shall have his abode in the region of Truth. The Brahmans have in the past misled everyone onto the path of Hell. You go and direct them in the way of the Name'. Thus having his orders from the Divine Court, he returned to the world of mortals.⁵

This statement clearly asserts that the mission of Baba Dayal had divine sanction. Since the ten Gurus were present in the abode of the Formless One, the commission of Baba Dayal had their tacit approval. The mission concerned the Sikhs of all the ten Gurus (the Singhs as well as the non-Singhs, the Khalsa as well as the Sehajdharis). The objective of the mission was to direct the Sikhs to 'the way of the Name' which had been forgotten under the baneful influence of Brahmans. Baba Dayal was already in a position to visit the abode of the Formless One, and after his commission he became the agency of liberation. As the true *guru* (*satguru*), was he to be equated with Guru Nanak and his successors? The *hukamnama* talks not only of the ten Gurus but also of Guru Granth Sahib, which carries the implication of

continuity of Guruship from Guru Nanak to Guru Granth Sahib. Could Baba Dayal be regarded as Guru in the same sense as Guru Nanak, his successors, and Guru Granth Sahib? Significantly, the authority of Guru Granth Sahib is invoked to free the Sikhs from Brahmanical rituals so that 'the correct ceremonies' sanctioned by the Guru could be observed on the occasions of birth, death, and marriage. The 'all-powerful guru' is Guru Granth Sahib: there is no need to seek advice from Brahmans who spread superstition. It is only proper for the Guru's Sikhs to obey the Guru's word. The Guru has put everything in Guru Granth Sahib, the True Master. A Sikh prays before Guru Granth Sahib, and does not enquire about 'the auspicious moment'. Evidently, the status claimed for Baba Dayal (Satguru Dayalji) is not the same as that of Guru Nanak and his successors or Guru Granth Sahib. The Sikh rites enjoined upon the Sikhs by Guru Nanak were revealed afresh by Satguru Dayal. The precepts advocated by Baba Dayal were 'enunciated by the Satguru Nanak himself'. In the matters of ritual as much as in the matters of belief and worship, Baba Dayal is interpreting Guru Nanak. The essence of Nirankari teaching was: 'worship none save the Word of Gurus; repeat the Name of the Formless One'.⁶ We may conclude that Baba Dayal claimed to be a true interpreter of the early Sikh tradition, basing himself on the authority of the Gurus themselves. For assuming this position, he did not need the authority of any living person or organization.

III

Baba Dayal emphasized the Formless aspect of God. The term *nirankar* itself comes from *Gurbani*. However, God for Guru Nanak and his successors is also the Creator who acquires attributes: God is both transcendent and immanent, above and beyond all creation and in the creation. Baba Dayal's insistence on the Formlessness of God appears to be linked up with his rejection of the idea of incarnation and the practice of idol worship, for which there is ample justification in *Gurbani*. Baba Dayal's insistence on contemplation and the mode of congregational worship in the Dharamsala was amply justified by the importance attached to *nam-simran* by Guru Nanak, and the practice of congregational worship in the Dharamsala at Kartarpur. The Christian missionaries who looked upon the Nirankari mode of worship in the Dharamsala as something new were not familiar with the early Sikh tradition. The Dharamsala in the early Sikh tradition was the centre of religious and social activities of the Sikhs. In the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas it figures as the most important Sikh institution. There is enough justification in *Gurbani* and the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas to equate the Dharamsala with the Gurdwara as the Sikh sacred space.⁷

The Nirankaris were assumed to be householders, following honest pursuits. Their way was open to the Khalsa. However, their emphasis was on *charanamrit* which was interpreted in its original sense of washing the feet of the Sikhs and drinking the water. In the Nirankari

Hukamnama the authority of Bhai Gurdas is rightly invoked. Indeed, the author of the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* makes an explicit statement on this practice.⁸

It is now generally agreed that social commitment was an important feature of the early Sikh tradition, leading to the concept of *miri-piri* and the institution of the Khalsa through the baptism of the double-edged sword as the symbol of full social commitment. Baba Dayal does not appear to have taken this aspect of the Sikh tradition fully into account. In another sense, however, Baba Dayal was closer to the Khalsa tradition than his contemporary Singhs. The total exclusion of Brahmans from Sikh ceremonies is underlined in the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Nand Lal.⁹ The *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh also insists on distinctive Sikh ceremonies and rituals for both the Keshdhari and Sahajdhari Sikhs.¹⁰ It is generally believed that the distinct identity of the Sikhs was sharpened by the institution of the Khalsa. It is significant to note, therefore, that the Christian missionaries refer to the keenness of the Nirankaris to be regarded as distinct from both Hindus and Muslims. It is significant because the Nirankaris did not insist at all on Singh or Khalsa identity and yet they looked upon Sikh identity as distinct. In this, they are close not only to the Khalsa tradition but also to the pre-Khalsa Sikh tradition. In *Gurbani*, in the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, in the *Janamsakhis*, and the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* there is ample evidence in support of a clear consciousness of Sikh identity in relation to others.¹¹

An important feature of the early Sikh tradition was

equation between the *sangat* and the Guru. The doctrine is clearly adumbrated in the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas who looks upon the *Gur-chela chela-Guru* syndrome as a distinctive feature of the Sikh Panth. The importance of the *sangat* in relation to the Guru is highlighted by the author of the *Dabistan-i Mazahib*.¹² This was the background to the enunciation of Guru Gobind Singh that the entire Khalsa would represent his form instead of any single person. The doctrine of Guru-Panth, or the idea that 'the Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa', was of crucial importance in the eighteenth century. It was relegated to the background in comparison with the doctrine of Guru-Granth during the early nineteenth century. Like many of his contemporary Sikhs, Baba Dayal does not attach any importance to the doctrine of Guru-Panth. Thus, on the whole, Baba Dayal's interpretation of the early Sikh tradition was amply justified but it was not comprehensive enough to embrace the whole of the Khalsa tradition.¹³

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Van Austin Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief*. Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1969 (paperback). This book deals with 'confrontation between the modern historian's principles of judgement and the Christian's will-to-believe' and, therefore, 'the problem of sorting out our way through the claims of critical historical knowledge and the claims of Christian faith'. The author of this 'important piece of theological work'

was Professor of Religious Thought at the University of Pennsylvania. The second and third chapters of the book deal with the autonomy of history, historical judgement, and the historian's standpoint.

2. John C.B. Webster, *The Nirankari Sikhs*. Batala: The Christian Institute of Sikh Studies, 1979, 1-7.
3. Ibid, 9-11.
4. All these three sources are reproduced by John Webster as appendices A, B and C: Ibid, 67-77.
5. An English translation of this Hukamnama is given by John Webster as Appendix G: Ibid, 83-99.
6. The question of Sikh attitude toward Guru Granth Sahib has been raised by both Sikh and non-Sikh scholars. The outsiders generally talk of 'worship' of the book by the Sikhs. Khushwant Singh also says that a number of ceremonies associated with the worship of idols have grown around the Granth due to the influx of Hindus into the Sikh fold. Even so, he goes on to add, that the Granth is not like the idol in a Hindu temple: 'It is the means and not the object of worship': *A History of the Sikhs*, Oxford India Paperbacks, 1999, I, 308. Nevertheless, Khushwant Singh looks upon 'rich canopies and coverings over the Granth' as 'elements of idolatry': Ibid, II, 135.

Kapur Singh's interpretation is totally

different. He asserts that the Sikhs do not worship their sacred book as some Western scholars would like us to believe. On all important occasions, a throne is arranged for installing the Guru Granth, wrapped and dressed in brocades, silks and other precious clothes symbolic of royalty; an attendant sits or stands behind the throne with the royal symbol of *chauri*; the visible body of the Guru is recognized as present there and every Sikh who enters the Presence presents a *nazr*, a donation of money or flowers or any other offering. All the ceremonious paraphernalia is nothing more than the usual symbols of royalty, enjoying sovereign power. The whole scene is designed to indicate to all and sundry that the Order of the Khalsa claims to be sovereign *sui generis*. Any other inference is wholly unwarranted and misconceived: *Parasharaprashna*. Ed. Piar Singh and Madanjit Kaur. Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1989, 170-71.

7. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*. Ed. Giani Hazara Singh. Amritsar, 1962, *Var III, Pauris 8 & 18; Var IX, Pauri 14; Var XXIX, Pauris 5 & 6; Var XXXV, Pauris 12, 14, 15.*
8. Bhai Gurdas ascribes to Guru Nanak the introduction of *charnamat* which, as stated by Bhai Gurdas, involved washing of the feet of a Sikh; the water used for washing the feet was not thrown away but drunk by the Sikhs. The author of the

Dabistan-i Mazahib relates that one Pratap Mal Chaddha became a Sikh through a Masand named Dwara. While initiating him as a disciple, Dwara washed his feet and the Sikhs present drank that water 'since whenever they (the Sikhs) admit anyone to their own religion, they do likewise': *Sikh History from Persian Sources*. Ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib. Tulika/Indian History Congress, 2001, 77-78.

9. W.H. McLeod, *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987, 134-35. The text on these pages is actually from Bhai Nand Lal's *Rahitnama* which was attached to a manuscript of the *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh. The relevant translation by McLeod is on page 203: 'He who is my Sikh will never seek the services of a Brahman. The ceremonies observed by my Panth were ordained by the Satguru, by Akal Purakh'. The last sentence can also be rendered as 'the Satguru, Akal Purakh, has once for all performed the *karam kirya* of my Panth'. In other words, there is no need whatever of performing any Brahmanical rite or ceremony by the Sikhs.
10. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, published by W.H. McLeod, is the most elaborate *Rahitnama*: it prescribes *rahit* for all Sikhs, making some distinction between Keshdhari and Sehajdhari Sikhs, and between Sikh men and Sikh women. Some practices on the basis of caste background

are also upheld.

11. J.S. Grewal, *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity*. Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997.
12. *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 76: 'Among the Sikhs it is customary that every desire they have, [they put] in an assembly where the Sikhs gather. They lay whatever they can before the *masand* or a Sikh, and then ask that they [the Sikhs] should join their hands and pray towards the *Guru*, so that the wish is attained. The *Guru* too similarly consults the *sangat* or the assembly of the Sikhs about his own wishes'.

In the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, the Guru, the Gurbani, and the Sangat are equated with one another, and with God: *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, *Var I*, *Pauri 3*; *Var III*, *Pauris 8, 10, 16 & 18*. *Var IV*, *Pauri 1*; *Var V*, *Pauris 7, 10 & 14*, *Var VI*, *Pauris 9 & 15*; *Var VII*, *Pauris 4, 6, 7, 11 & 18*; *Var IX*, *Pauris 1, 13 & 14*; *Var XII*, *Puaris 2, 4 & 17*; *Var XIII*, *Pauri 21*; *Var XX*, *Pauri 4*; *Var XXIV*, *Pauris 9-13, 18-20 & 25*; *Var XXVI*, *Pauri 17*; *Var XXXII*, *Pauri 2*.

13. It is true that the baptism of the double-edged sword and, consequently the bearing of arms and the epithet Singh, was voluntary and not an imposition. This was made absolutely clear by Guru Gobind Singh when he asked for volunteers. This finds ample support from the extant *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Sundri, Mata Sahib

Devi, and 'the Khalsa' issued from 1702 to 1757. In one of the *hukamnamas* issued by the tenth Guru in 1702, there is the statement that 'Bhai Mihar Chand, the *peshkar* of the *khufia-navis*, is my Khalsa'. The Khalsa Mihar Chand does not bear the epithet Singh. In another *hukamnama*, Dharam Chand and Karam Chand as well as Bhai Mihar Chand are 'my Khalsa'. Yet another *hukamnama* mentions Bhai Bindraban and Gulal Chand as 'my Khalsa'. Similarly, in 1704 among the Khalsa of the Guru are Bhai Sukhia, Bhai Mukhia and Parsa. In 1706, the Khalsa mentioned by name are Bhai Biraj Singh, Bhai Bulaki Singh, Bhai Baj Singh, and Bhai Dharam Singh. In 1708, the Khalsa named is Kirpa Singh. In a *hukamnama* of Banda Singh Bahadur, all the Khalsa named are 'Singhs'. Some of the *hukamnamas* of Mata Sundri mention the names of individuals in Khalsa *sangats*. In 1717, over a dozen in the Patna *sangat* are 'Singhs' but there are also Bhai Debi Das and Bhai Gulab Rai. In 1721, all the nine individuals mentioned are 'Singhs'. In 1722, all the seventeen are 'Singhs'. On the same day, however, another *hukamnama* to Patna mentions sixteen non-Singh names. In the *sangat* of Ghazipur in 1723, there are ten Singhs and two non-Singhs. In 1728, the names mentioned are Bhai Duna, Bhai Bigha Mal, and Bhai Gurdas. In 1729, in a *hukamnama* of Mata Sahib Devi, all the names mentioned in the Patna *sangat* are 'Singhs'. In 1730, however, in the *sangat* of

Banaras all the names are non-Singh. At the same time, the names in the *hukamnama* of Mata Sundri sent to Patna are all 'Singhs'. A *hukamnama* issued in 1757 in the name of 'the Khalsa of Sat Sri Akal Purakh Ji', the names of individuals in the Patna *sangat* are Bhai Aya, Bhai Mihar Singh, and Bhai Mahbub. These *hukamnamas* give clear evidence of the presence of non-Singhs in Khalsa *sangats*. There is a suggestion here that these Khalsa were the 'sehajdharis' of the *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh. The Singh identity was not the exclusive identity of the Sikhs. But there is plenty of evidence in the Sikh literature of the eighteenth century that Singh identity was not only the dominant but also the preferable identity. In fact, preference for the baptism of the double-edged sword and Singh identity was built into Guru Gobind Singh's call for volunteers. The institution of the Five Beloved (*panj piaras*) embodies this preference.

For the *hukamnamas* referred to, Ganda Singh (ed), *Hukamnamay*. Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, Nos. 54, 55, 57, 60, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 76, 77 & 86.

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John C.B. Webster's *The Nirankari Sikhs* contains nine appendices : Rev. J.H. Morrison's report of 1853, an extract from the Annual Report of Lodiana Mission for the year ending September 1854, J.H. Orbison's report of 1861, extracts from the Census Reports of 1881 and 1891, an extract from H.A. Rose's *Glossary of Tribes and Castes* (1914), English translation of the Nirankari Hukamnama and of the will of Sahib Ratta Ji, and correspondence of Baba Gurdit Singh with the Secretary to the Government of India, Legislative Department, Calcutta, regarding the Anand Marriage Bill. Apart from these sources, Webster used the Census Reports of 1901 and 1911, 'Petitions Regarding the Anand Marriage Act, VII of 1909', Major M. Leach's 'Notes on the Religion of the Sikhs and Other Sects Inhabiting the Punjab' (1845), and nearly all the Nirankari 'tracts'. A few articles also figure in Webster's 'Notes'. Presenting essentially the Nirankari view are 'The Nirankaris', *The Panjab Past and Present* (VII, 1973); 'The Nirankaris as Harbinger of Sikh Renaissance', *The Spokesman Weekly* (XXIV, 1974); 'The Nirankaris : A Protestant Movement', *The Spokesman Weekly* (XXVI, 1976); and 'The Nature of Guruship according to Nirankari Sikh Tradition', *The Nature of Guruship*, ed. Clarence O. McMullan (Delhi, 1976). For appreciation of the positive role of the Nirankaris by no less a person than Sardar Hukam Singh, Webster refers to 'Vagaries of the Nirankari Mandal', *The Spokesman Weekly* (XXIII, 1973).

It is interesting to note that only two recent works figure in the papers on Baba Dayal in the present volume : *Sikhism and the Nirankari Movement* (1980) by Ganda Singh, and *Baba Dayal : Crusader of True Sikhism*, ed. Man Singh Nirankari and Dewan Singh (1997). The paper by Professor Dharam Singh on the 'writings' mentions five additional works : the *Mahan Kosh*, the *Phulwari* of 1929-30, the *Punjab dian Lehran*, Dard's *Merian Itihasik Yadan*, and Surjit Kaur Jolly's *Sikh Revivalist Movements*. Some more works have been noticed in the 'Introduction' to the present volume. The bulk of this additional literature relates to the Nirankari Movement in general. Hardly any new source has been added for the life and work of Baba Dayal. The socio-religious situation of the early nineteenth Punjab needs to be studied thoroughly and in depth for a better interpretation of the meagre information we have on Baba Dayal.

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ਨਾਮ - ਸਿਮਰਨ
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ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਸੇਵਾ